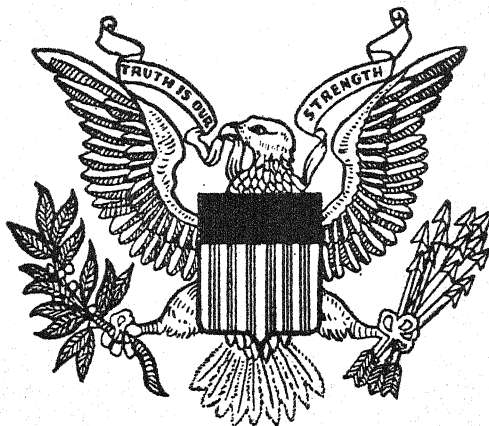


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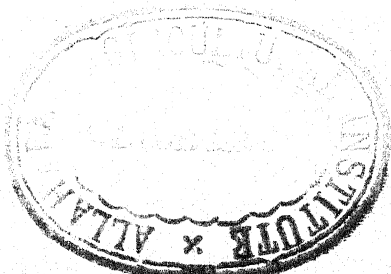
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TWENTIETH-CENTURY

AMERICAN POETRY

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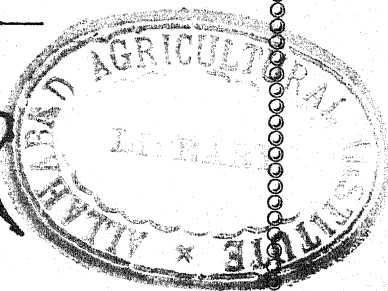


TWENTIETH-CENTURY  
AMERICAN  
POETRY

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*Edited, and with a Preface, by*  
*Conrad Aiken*

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"The Wanderer" by William Carlos Williams

Edmund Wilson

"Riverton," "A House of the Eighties" and "The Voice" by Edmund Wilson

C. A.





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## PREFACE

WHEN this anthology was first compiled, twenty-two years ago, it was with a very specific purpose: it was primarily designed for publication in England, and in the pious hope of enlightening that country, then singularly uninformed about American literature, as to the state of contemporary American poetry. With this end in view, the editor quite avowedly made no attempt, as he put it, "to cover the entire field" of American poetry, but rather, as seemed to promise a more effective introduction, "to compile an anthology in which fewer poets might figure, and in which, therefore, they might more generously and identifiably be represented." For this purpose, fourteen poets were selected, and with them Emily Dickinson, the latter because she was at that time wholly unknown in England, and because, as the editor observed it, "seemed wise to include in an anthology of the contemporary, one poet of an earlier generation." The little book justified itself, if modestly. The English critics were properly irritated, and made their first annoyed and surprised acquaintance with, among others, Robinson and Stevens.

In the five years which passed before the book came out in America, it did not seem to the editor that the poetic "scene" had sufficiently altered, in its main features, to warrant any great change in its contents. Accordingly, it remained pretty much the same book that the English had known; and in fact it has remained the same ever since. The depression came and went, and the New Deal, and the Writers' Project. And the war came. Indeed, a generation, and more, had passed and quite suddenly it appeared that where before there was one poet, now there were fifty. To the twenty years of twentieth-century American poetry in the original volume, there were now twenty more to be added; and what had in those days seemed at best a very promising beginning was now secure and brilliant in accomplishment. "The best English poetry being written today" — an anonymous American writer made the remark a few years ago to an anonymous English writer — "is being written by Americans." It was quite true, and it is still quite true. The half

century of American poetry which begins with Emily Dickinson is so varied, so rich and so new, as to compare favorably with any but the greatest similar spans in the whole history of English poetry. For the first time, English poetry is really being revitalized on the western shores of the Atlantic. For the first time, American poetry is assured, mature and easy, in an unforced awareness of its wonderful bilateral tradition, its unique inheritance of two separate but complementary cultures. "The European who has settled in America"—the editor noted in his earlier volume—"and who has become the American, uses the English language; but one must bear it constantly in mind that although he has worked few outward changes in the language, he has none the less begun very distinctly to charge it anew with emotional and temperamental and tactile significances, which arise naturally out of his adjustment to a new scene." Mr. T. S. Eliot once observed that the American had one very great cultural advantage over the European: he could, if he wished, *become* European; in that process of "becoming," or acquiring, he could actually possess more than the European, possess it with a fuller awareness. May one not say similarly that the English language, whether as it crossed the Atlantic in the *Mayflower*, or as it passes the New York customs barrier today, has one great advantage over the English language of Whitechapel or Canterbury or Parliament Square or the Banbury Road? It is the English language becoming American.

But let the poets speak for themselves. Here are fifty-five where before were fifteen; and of every sort; and all of them good. As in his first compilation, the editor has on the whole preferred to include such poets as could be represented with a group of poems, and, with a few exceptions, to avoid the one-poem poet. Emily Dickinson remains, both as forerunner and as touchstone. Trumbull Stickney, the natural link between Emily Dickinson and the real twentieth-century "thing," has been given the space that he deserves; he too is a forerunner. If Mr. W. H. Auden is not represented, it is simply because he is really no more an American poet than Mr. Eliot is an English one. For the rest, here is such a body of poetry as must, one dares to believe, become a literary landmark.

CONRAD AIKEN

*Brewster, Massachusetts.*

TWENTIETH-CENTURY

*AMERICAN POETRY*





---

EMILY DICKINSON

---

*"In Winter"*

I

IN Winter, in my room,  
I came upon a worm,  
Pink, lank, and warm.  
But as he was a worm  
And worms presume,  
Not quite with him at home—  
Secured him by a string  
To something neighbouring,  
And went along.

A trifle afterward  
A thing occurred,  
I'd not believe it if I heard—  
But state with creeping blood;  
A snake, with mottles rare,  
Surveyed my chamber floor,  
In feature as the worm before,  
But ringed with power.  
The very string  
With which I tied him, too,  
When he was mean and new,  
That string was there.

I shrank—"How fair you are!"  
Propitiation's claw—

*AMERICAN POETRY*

"Afraid," he hissed,  
"Of me?  
No cordiality?"  
He fathomed me.

Then to a rhythm slim  
Secreted in his form,  
As patterns swim,  
Projected him.

That time I flew,  
Both eyes his way,  
Lest he pursue—  
Nor ever ceased to run,  
Till in a distant town,  
Towns on from mine—  
I sat me down;  
This was a dream.

## II

I died for beauty, but was scarce  
Adjusted in the tomb,  
When one who died for truth was lain  
In an adjoining room.

He questioned softly why I failed?  
"For beauty," I replied.  
"And I for truth—the two are one;  
We brethren are," he said.

And so, as kinsmen met a-night,  
We talked between the rooms,  
Until the moss had reached our lips,  
And covered up our names.

## III

I've seen a dying eye  
Run round and round a room  
In search of something, as it seemed,  
Then cloudier become;  
And then, obscure with fog,  
And then be soldered down,  
Without disclosing what it be,  
'Twere blessed to have seen.

## IV

*The Chariot*

BECAUSE I could not stop for Death,  
He kindly stopped for me;  
The carriage held but just ourselves  
And Immortality.

We slowly drove, he knew no haste,  
And I had put away  
My labour, and my leisure too,  
For his civility.

We passed the school where children played,  
Their lessons scarcely done;  
We passed the fields of gazing grain,  
We passed the setting sun.

We paused before a house that seemed  
A swelling on the ground;  
The roof was scarcely visible,  
The cornice but a mound.

Since then 'tis centuries; but each  
Feels shorter than the day  
I first surmised the horses' heads  
Were toward eternity.



## V

If I shouldn't be alive  
When the robins come,  
Give the one in red cravat  
A memorial crumb.

If I couldn't thank you,  
Being just asleep,  
You will know I'm trying  
With my granite lip!

## VI

Safe in their alabaster chambers,  
Untouched by morning and untouched by noon,  
Sleep the meek members of the resurrection,  
Rafters of satin, and roof of stone.

Light laughs the breeze in her castle of sunshine;  
Babbles the bee in a stolid ear;  
Pipe the sweet birds in ignorant cadence—  
Ah, what sagacity perished here!

Grand go the years in the crescent above them;  
Worlds scoop their arcs, and firmaments row,  
Diadems drop and Doges surrender,  
Soundless as dots on a disk of snow.

## VII

*The Wind*

○F all the sounds despatched abroad,  
There's not a charge to me  
Like that old measure in the boughs,  
That phraseless melody

The wind does, working like a hand  
Whose fingers brush the sky,  
Then quiver down, with tufts of tune  
Permitted gods and me.

When winds go round and round in bands,  
And thrum upon the door,  
And birds take places overhead,  
To bear them orchestra,

I crave him grace, of summer boughs,  
If such an outcast be,  
He never heard that fleshless chant  
Rise solemn in the tree,

As if some caravan of sound  
On deserts, in the sky,  
Had broken rank,  
Then knit, and passed  
In seamless company.

## VIII

*In the Garden*

A BIRD came down the walk:  
He did not know I saw;  
He bit an angle-worm in halves  
And ate the fellow, raw.

And then he drank a dew  
From a convenient grass,  
And then hopped sideways to the wall  
To let a beetle pass.

He glanced with rapid eyes  
That hurried all abroad—  
They looked like frightened beads, I thought;  
He stirred his velvet head

Like one in danger; cautious,  
I offered him a crumb,  
And he unrolled his feathers  
And rowed him softer home

Than oars divide the ocean,  
Too silver for a seam,  
Or butterflies, off banks of noon,  
Leap, plashless, as they swim.

## IX

*The Snake*

A NARROW fellow in the grass  
Occasionally rides;  
You may have met him—did you not,  
His notice sudden is.

The grass divides as with a comb,  
A spotted shaft is seen;  
And then it closes at your feet  
And opens further on.

He likes a boggy acre,  
A floor too cool for corn.  
Yet when a child, and barefoot,  
I more than once, at morn,

Have passed, I thought, a whip-lash  
Unbraiding in the sun—  
When, stooping to secure it,  
It wrinkled, and was gone.

Several of nature's people  
I know, and they know me;  
I feel for them a transport  
Of cordiality;

But never met this fellow,  
Attended or alone,  
Without a tighter breathing,  
And zero at the bone.

## X

*The Storm*

THERE came a wind like a bugle;  
It quivered through the grass,  
And a green chill upon the heat  
So ominous did pass  
We barred the windows and the doors  
As from an emerald ghost;  
The doom's electric moccasin  
That very instant passed.  
On a strange mob of panting trees,  
And fences fled away,  
And rivers where the houses ran  
The living looked that day.  
The bell within the steeple wild  
The flying tidings whirled.  
How much can come  
And much can go,  
And yet abide the world!

## XI

It was not death, for I stood up,  
And all the dead lie down;  
It was not night, for all the bells  
Put out their tongues, for noon.

It was not frost, for on my flesh  
I felt siroccos crawl—  
Nor fire, for just my marble feet  
Could keep a chancel cool.

## AMERICAN POETRY

And yet it tasted like them all;  
 The figures I have seen  
 Set orderly for burial,  
 Reminded me of mine,

As if my life were shaven  
 And fitted to a frame,  
 And could not breathe without a key;  
 And 'twas like midnight, some,

When everything that ticked has stopped,  
 And space stares, all around,  
 Or grisly frosts, first autumn morns,  
 Repeal the beating ground.

But most like chaos—stopless, cool—  
 Without a chance or spar,  
 Or even a report of land  
 To justify despair.

## XII

*Parting*

MY life closed twice before its close;  
 It yet remains to see  
 If Immortality unveil  
 A third event to me,

So huge, so hopeless to conceive,  
 As these that twice befell.  
 Parting is all we know of heaven,  
 And all we need of hell.

## XIII

To my quick ear the leaves conferred;  
 The bushes they were bells;

EMILY DICKINSON

11

I could not find a privacy  
From Nature's sentinels.

In cave if I presumed to hide,  
The walls began to tell;  
Creation seemed a mighty crack  
To make me visible.

XIV

Not any sunny tone  
From any fervent zone  
Finds entrance there.  
Better a grave of Balm  
Toward human nature's home,  
And Robins near,  
Than a stupendous Tomb  
Proclaiming to the gloom  
How dead we are.

XV

*A Snake*

SWEET is the swamp with its secrets,  
Until we meet a snake;  
'Tis then we sigh for houses,  
And our departure take  
At that enthralling gallop  
That only childhood knows,  
A snake is summer's treason,  
And guile is where it goes.

XVI

I have a king who does not speak;  
So, wondering, through the hours meek

## AMERICAN POETRY

I trudge the day away—  
 Half glad when it is night and sleep,  
 If, haply, through a dream to peep  
 In parlours shut by day.

And if I do, when morning comes  
 It is as if a hundred drums  
 Did round my pillow roll,  
 And shouts fill all my childish sky,  
 And bells keep saying 'victory'  
 From steeples in my soul!

And if I don't, the little Bird  
 Within the orchard is not heard,  
 And I omit to pray,  
 'Father, Thy will be done' today,  
 For my will goes the other way,  
 And it were perjury!

## XVII

*Evening*

THE cricket sang,  
 And set the sun,  
 And workmen finished, one by one  
 Their seam the day upon.

The low grass loaded with the dew,  
 The twilight stood as strangers do  
 With hat in hand, polite and new,  
 To stay as if, or go.

A vastness, as a neighbour, came—  
 A wisdom without face or name,  
 A peace, as hemispheres at home—  
 And so the night became.

## XVIII

*Aurora*

OF bronze and blaze  
The north, to-night!  
So adequate its forms,  
So preconcerted with itself,  
So distant to alarms—  
An unconcern so sovereign  
To universe, or me,  
It paints my simple spirit  
With tints of majesty,  
Till I take vaster attitudes,  
And strut upon my stem,  
Disdaining men and oxygen,  
For arrogance of them.  
My splendours are menagerie;  
But their competeless show  
Will entertain the centuries  
When I am, long ago,  
An island in dishonoured grass,  
Whom none but daisies know.

## XIX

*Immortality*

IT is an honourable thought,  
And makes one lift one's hat,  
As one encountered gentlefolk  
Upon a daily street,

That we've immortal place,  
Though pyramids decay,  
And kingdoms, like the orchard,  
Flit russetly away.



## XX

*Trying to Forget*

**B**EREAVED of all, I went abroad,  
No less bereaved to be  
Upon a new peninsula—  
The grave preceded me,

Obtained my lodgings ere myself,  
And when I sought my bed,  
The grave it was, reposed upon  
The pillow for my head.

I waked, to find it first awake,  
I rose—it followed me;  
I tried to drop it in the crowd,  
To lose it in the sea,

In cups of artificial drowse  
To sleep its shape away—  
The grave was finished, but the spade  
Remained in memory.

## XXI

I felt a funeral in my brain,  
And mourners, to and fro,  
Kept treading, treading, till it seemed  
That sense was breaking through.

And when they all were seated,  
A service like a drum  
Kept beating, beating, till I thought  
My mind was going numb.

And then I heard them lift a box,  
And creak across my soul

With those same boots of lead, again.  
Then space began to toll

As all the heavens were a bell,  
And Being but an ear,  
And I am silence some strange race,  
Wrecked, solitary, here.

## XXII

*Dying*

I heard a fly buzz when I died;  
The stillness round my form  
Was like the stillness in the air  
Between the heavens of storm.

The eyes beside had wrung them dry,  
And breaths were gathering sure  
For that last onset, when the king  
Be witnessed in his power.

I willed my keepsakes, signed away  
What portion of me I  
Could make assignable—and then  
There interposed a fly,

With blue, uncertain, stumbling buzz,  
Between the light and me;  
And then the windows failed, and then  
I could not see to see.

## XXIII

A clock stopped—not the mantel's;  
Geneva's farthest skill  
Can't put the puppet bowing  
That just now dangled still.

An awe came on the trinket!  
The figures hunched with pain,  
Then quivered out of decimals  
Into degreeless noon.

It will not stir for doctors,  
This pendulum of snow;  
The shopman importunes it,  
While cool, concernless No

Nods from the gilded pointers,  
Nods from the seconds slim,  
Decades of arrogance between  
The dial life and him.

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EDWIN ARLINGTON ROBINSON

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*Ben Jonson Entertains a Man from Stratford*

YOU are a friend then, as I make it out,  
Of our man Shakespeare, who alone of us  
Will put an ass's head in Fairyland  
As he would add a shilling to more shillings,  
All most harmonious—and out of his  
Miraculous inviolable increase  
Fills Ilion, Rome, or any town you like  
Of olden time with timeless Englishmen;  
And I must wonder what you think of him—  
All you down there where your small Avon flows  
By Stratford, and where you're an Alderman.  
Some, for a guess, would have him riding back  
To be a farrier there, or say a dyer;  
Or maybe one of your adept surveyors;  
Or like enough the wizard of all tanners.

Not you—no fear of that; for I discern  
In you a kindling of the flame that saves—  
The nimble element, the true caloric;  
I see it, and was told of it, moreover,  
By our discriminate friend himself, no other.  
Had you been one of the sad average,  
As he would have it—meaning, as I take it,  
The sinew and the solvent of our Island,  
You'd not be buying beer for this Terpander's  
Approved and estimated friend Ben Jonson;  
He'd never foist it as a part of his  
Contingent entertainment of a townsman  
While he goes off rehearsing, as he must,  
If he shall ever be the Duke of Stratford.  
And my words are no shadow on your town—  
Far from it; for one town's as like another  
As all are unlike London. Oh, he knows it—  
And there's the Stratford in him; he denies it,  
And there's the Shakespeare in him. So, God help him!  
I tell him he needs Greek; but neither God  
Nor Greek will help him. Nothing will help that man.  
You see the fates have given him so much,  
He must have all or perish—or look out  
Of London, where he sees too many lords.  
They're part of half what ails him: I suppose  
There's nothing fouler down among the demons  
Than what it is he feels when he remembers  
The dust and sweat and ointment of his calling  
With his lords looking on and laughing at him.  
King as he is, he can't be king *de facto*,  
And that's as well, because he wouldn't like it;  
He'd frame a lower rating of men then  
Than he has now; and after that would come  
An abdication or an apoplexy.  
He can't be king, not even king of Stratford—  
Though half the world, if not the whole of it,  
May crown him with a crown that fits no king  
Save Lord Apollo's homesick emissary:  
Not there on Avon, or on any stream

Where Naiads and their white arms are no more  
Shall he find home again. It's all too bad.  
But there's a comfort, for he'll have that House—  
The best you ever saw; and he'll be there  
Anon, as you're an Alderman. Good God!  
He makes me lie awake o' nights and laugh.

And you have known him from his origin,  
You tell me; and a most uncommon urchin  
He must have been to the few seeing ones—  
A trifle terrifying, I dare say,  
Discovering a world with his man's eyes,  
Quite as another lad might see some finches,  
If he looked hard and had an eye for Nature.  
But this one had his eyes and their foretelling,  
And he had you to fare with, and what else?  
He must have had a father and a mother—  
In fact I've heard him say so—and a dog,  
As a boy should, I venture; and the dog,  
Most likely, was the only man who knew him.  
A dog, for all I know, is what he needs  
As much as anything right here to-day,  
To counsel him about his disillusions,  
Old aches, and parturitions of what's coming—  
A dog of orders, an emeritus,  
To wag his tail at him when he comes home,  
And then to put his paws up on his knees  
And say, "For God's sake, what's it all about?"

I don't know whether he needs a dog or not—  
Or what he needs. I tell him he needs Greek;  
I'll talk of rules and Aristotle with him,  
And if his tongue's at home he'll say to that,  
"I have your word that Aristotle knows,  
And you mine that I don't know Aristotle."  
He'll all at odds with all the unities,  
And what's yet worse it doesn't seem to matter;  
He treads along through Time's old wilderness  
As if the tramp of all the centuries

Had left no roads—and there are none, for him;  
He doesn't see them, even with those eyes—  
And that's a pity, or I say it is.  
Accordingly we have him as we have him—  
Going his way, the way that he goes best,  
A pleasant animal with no great noise  
Or nonsense anywhere to set him off—  
Save only divers and inclement devils  
Have made of late his heart their dwelling-place.  
A flame half ready to fly out sometimes  
At some annoyance may be fanned up in him,  
But soon it falls, and when it falls goes out;  
He knows how little room there is in there  
For crude and futile animosities,  
And how much for the joy of being whole,  
And how much for long sorrow and old pain.  
On our side there are some who may be given  
To grow old wondering what he thinks of us  
And some above us, who are, in his eyes,  
Above himself—and that's quite right and English.  
Yet here we smile, or disappoint the gods  
Who made it so; the gods have always eyes  
To see men scratch; and they see one down here  
Who itches, manor-bitten, to the bone,  
Albeit he knows himself—yes, yes, he knows—  
The lord of more than England and of more  
Than all the seas of England in all time  
Shall ever wash. D'ye wonder that I laugh?  
He see me, and he doesn't seem to care;  
And why the devil should he? I can't tell you.  
I'll meet him out alone of a bright Sunday,  
Trim, rather spruce, and quite the gentleman.  
"What, ho, my lord!" say I. He doesn't hear me;  
Wherefore I have to pause and look at him.  
He's not enormous, but one looks at him.  
A little on the round if you insist,  
For now, God save the mark, he's growing old;  
He's five and forty, and to hear him talk  
These days you'd call him eighty; then you'd add

More years to that. He's old enough to be  
The father of a world, and so he is.  
"Ben, you're a scholar, what's the time of day?"  
Says he; and there shines out of him again  
An aged light that has no age or station—  
The mystery that's his—a mischievous  
Half-mad serenity that laughs at fame  
For being won so easy, and at friends  
Who laugh at him for what he wants the most,  
And for his dukedom down in Warwickshire;—  
By which you see we're all a little jealous. . . .  
Poor Greenel! I fear the colour of his name  
Was even as that of his ascending soul;  
And he was one where there are many others—  
Some scrivening to the end against their fate,  
Their puppets all in ink and all to die there;  
And some with hands that once would shade an eye  
That scanned Euripides and Æschylus  
Will reach by this time for a pot-house mop  
To slush their first and last of royalties.  
Poor devils! and they all play to his hand;  
For so it was in Athens and old Rome.  
But that's not here or there; I've wandered off.  
Green does it, or I'm careful. Where's that boy?

Yes, he'll go back to Stratford. And we'll miss him?  
Dear sir, there'll be no London here without him.  
We'll all be riding, one of these fine days,  
Down there to see him—and his wife won't like us;  
And then we'll think of what he never said  
Of women—which, if taken all in all  
With what he did say, would buy many horses.  
Though nowadays he's not so much for women:  
"So few of them," he says, "are worth the guessing."  
But there's a worm at work when he says that,  
And while he says it one feels in the air  
A deal of circumambient hocus-pocus.  
They've had him, dancing till his toes were tender,  
And he can feel 'em now, come chilly rains.

There's no long cry for going into it,  
However, and we don't know much about it.  
But you in Stratford, like most here in London.  
Have more now in the *Sonnets* than you paid for;  
He's put one there with all her poison on,  
To make a singing fiction of a shadow  
That's in his life a fact, and always will be.  
But she's no care of ours, though Time, I fear,  
Will have a more reverberant ado  
About her than about another one  
Who seems to have decoyed him, married him,  
And sent him scuttling on his way to London—  
With much already learned, and more to learn,  
And more to follow. Lord! how I see him now,  
Pretending, maybe trying, to be like us.  
Whatever he may have meant, we never had him;  
He failed us, or escaped, or what you will—  
And there was that about him (God knows what—  
We'd flayed another had he tried it on us)  
That made as many of us as had wits  
More fond of all his easy distances  
Than one another's noise and clap-your-shoulder.  
But think you not, my friend, he'd never talk!  
Talk? He was eldritch at it; and we listened—  
Thereby acquiring much we knew before  
About ourselves, and hitherto had held  
Irrelevant, or not prime to the purpose.  
And there were some, of course, and there be now,  
Disordered and reduced amazedly  
To resignation by the mystic seal  
Of young finality the gods had laid  
On everything that made him a young demon;  
And one or two shot looks at him already  
As he had been their executioner;  
And once or twice he was, not knowing it—  
Or knowing, being sorry for poor clay  
And saying nothing . . . Yet, for all his engines,  
You'll meet a thousand of an afternoon  
Who strut and sun themselves and see around 'em



A world made out of more that has a reason  
Than his, I swear, that he sees here to-day;  
Though he may scarcely give a Fool an exit  
But we mark how he sees in everything  
A law that, given that we flout it once too often,  
Brings fire and iron down on our naked heads.  
To me it looks as if the power that made him,  
For fear of giving all things to one creature,  
Left out the first—faith, innocence, illusion,  
Whatever 'tis that keeps us out o' Bedlam—  
And thereby, for his too consuming vision,  
Empowered him out of nature; though to see him,  
You'd never guess what's going on inside him.  
He'll break out some day like a keg of ale  
With too much independent frenzy in it;  
And all for cellaring what he knows won't keep,  
And what he'd best forget—but that he can't.  
You'll have it, and have more than I'm foretelling;  
And there'll be such a roaring at the Globe  
As never stunned the bleeding gladiators.  
He'll have to change the colour of its hair  
A bit, for now he calls it Cleopatra.  
Black hair would never do for Cleopatra.  
But you and I are not yet two old women,  
And you're a man of office. What he does  
Is more to you than how it is he does it—  
And that's what the Lord God has never told him.  
They work together, and the Devil helps 'em;  
They do it of a morning, or if not,  
They do it of a night; in which event  
He's peevish of a morning. He seems old;  
He's not the proper stomach or the sleep—  
And they're two sovran agents to conserve him  
Against the fiery art that has no mercy  
But what's in that prodigious grand new House.  
I gather something happening in his boyhood  
Fulfilled him with a boy's determination  
To make all Stratford 'ware of him. Well, well,  
I hope at last he'll have his joy of it,

And all his pigs and sheep and bellowing beeves,  
And frogs and owls and unicorns, moreover,  
Be less than hell to his attendant ears.  
Oh, past a doubt we'll all go down to see him.

He may be wise. With London two days off,  
Down there some wind of heaven may yet revive him;  
But there's no quickening breath from anywhere  
Shall make of him again the young poised faun  
From Warwickshire, who'd made, it seems, already  
A legend of himself before I came  
To blink before the last of his first lightning.  
Whatever there be, there'll be no more of that;  
The coming on of his old monster Time  
Has made him a still man; and he has dreams  
Were fair to think on once, and all found hollow.  
He knows how much of what men paint themselves  
Would blister in the light of what they are;  
He sees how much of what was great now shares  
An eminence transformed and ordinary;  
He knows too much of what the world has hushed  
In others, to be loud now for himself;  
He knows now at what height low enemies  
May reach his heart, and high friends let him fall;  
But what not even such as he may know  
Bedevils him the worst: his lark may sing  
At heaven's gate how he will, and for as long  
As joy may listen, but *he* sees no gate,  
Save one whereat the spent clay waits a little  
Before the churchyard has it, and the worm.  
Not long ago, late in an afternoon,  
I came on him unseen down Lambeth way,  
And on my life I was afear'd of him:  
He gloomed and mumbled like a soul from Tophet,  
His hands behind him and his head bent solemn.  
"What is it now," said I, "another woman?"  
That made him sorry for me, and he smiled.  
"No, Ben," he mused; "it's Nothing. It's all Nothing.  
We come, we go; and when we're done, we're done;

Spiders and flies—we're mostly one or t'other—  
We come, we go; and when we're done, we're done;"  
"By God, you sing that song as if you knew it!"  
Said I, by way of cheering him; "what ails ye?"  
"I think I must have come down here to think,"  
Says he to that, and pulls his little beard;  
"Your fly will serve as well as anybody,  
And what's his hour? He flies, and flies, and flies,  
And in his fly's mind has a brave appearance;  
And then your spider gets him in her net,  
And eats him out, and hangs him up to dry.  
That's Nature, the kind mother of us all.  
And then your slattern housemaid swings her broom,  
And where's your spider? And that's Nature, also.  
It's Nature, and it's Nothing. It's all Nothing.  
It's all a world where bugs and emperors  
Go singularly back to the same dust,  
Each in his time; and the old, ordered stars  
That sang together, Ben, will sing the same  
Old stave to-morrow."

When he talks like that,  
There's nothing for a human man to do  
But lead him to some grateful nook like this  
Where we be now, and there to make him drink.  
He'll drink, for love of me, and then be sick;  
A sad sign always in a man of parts,  
And always very ominous. The great  
Should be as large in liquor as in love—  
And our great friend is not so large in either:  
One disaffects him, and the other fails him;  
Whatso he drinks that has an antic in it,  
He's wondering what's to pay in his insides;  
And while his eyes are on the Cyprian  
He's fribbling all the time with that damned House.  
We laugh here at his thrift, but after all  
It may be thrift that saves him from the devil;  
God gave it, anyhow—and we'll suppose  
He knew the compound of His handiwork.

To-day the clouds are with him, but anon  
He'll out of 'em enough to shake the tree  
Of life itself and bring down fruit unheard-of—  
And, throwing in the bruised and whole together,  
Prepare a wine to make us drunk with wonder;  
And if he live, there'll be a sunset spell  
Thrown over him as over a glassed lake  
That yesterday was all a black wild water.

God send he live to give us, if no more,  
What now's a-rampage in him, and exhibit,  
With a decent half-allegiance to the ages  
An earnest of at least a casual eye  
Turned once on what he owes to Gutenberg,  
And to the fealty of more centuries  
Than are as yet a picture in our vision.  
"There's time enough—I'll do it when I'm old,  
And we're immortal men," he says to that;  
And then he says to me, "Ben, what's 'immortal'?  
Think you by any force of ordination  
It may be nothing of a sort more noisy  
Than a small oblivion of component ashes  
That of a dream-addicted world was once  
A moving atomy much like your friend here?"  
Nothing will help that man. To make him laugh,  
I said then he was a mad mountebank—  
And by the Lord I nearer made him cry.  
I could have eat an eft then, on my knees,  
Tails, claws, and all of him; for I had stung  
The king of men, who had no sting for me,  
And I had hurt him in his memories;  
And I say now, as I shall say again,  
I love the man this side idolatry.  
He'll do it when he's old, he says. I wonder.  
He may not be so ancient as all that.  
For such as he the thing that is to do  
Will do itself—but there's a reckoning;  
The sessions that are now too much his own,  
The roiling inward of a still outside,

The churning out of all those blood-fed lines,  
The nights of many schemes and little sleep,  
The full brain hammered hot with too much thinking,  
The vexed heart over-worn with too much aching—  
This weary jangling of conjoined affairs  
Made out of elements that have no end,  
And all confused at once, I understand,  
Is not what makes a man to live forever.  
O, no, not now! He'll not be going now:  
There'll be time yet for God knows what explosions  
Before he goes. He'll stay awhile. Just wait:  
Just wait a year or two for Cleopatra,  
For she's to be a balsam and a comfort;  
And that's not all a jape of mine now, either.  
For granted once the old way of Apollo  
Sings in a man, he may then, if he's able,  
Strike unafraid whatever strings he will  
Upon the last and wildest of new lyres;  
Nor out of his new magic, though it hymn  
The shrieks of dungeoned hell, shall he create  
A madness or a gloom to shut quite out  
A cleaving daylight, and a last great calm  
Triumphant over shipwreck and all storms.  
He might have given Aristotle creeps,  
But surely would have given him his *katharsis*.  
He'll not be going yet. There's too much yet  
Unsung within the man. But when he goes,  
I'd stake ye coin o' the realm his only care  
For a phantom world he sounded and found wanting  
Will be a portion here, a portion there,  
Of this or that thing or some other thing  
That has a patent and intrinsical  
Equivalence in those egregious shillings.  
And yet he knows, God help him! Tell me, now,  
If ever there was anything let loose  
On earth by gods or devils heretofore  
Like this mad, careful, proud, indifferent Shakespeare!  
Where was it, if it ever was? By heaven,  
'Twas never yet in Rhodes or Pergamon—

In Thebes or Nineveh, a thing like this!  
No thing like this was ever out of England;  
And that he knows. I wonder if he cares.  
Perhaps he does. . . . O Lord, that House in Stratford!

### *Eros Turannos*

SHE fears him, and will always ask  
What fated her to choose him;  
She meets in his engaging mask  
All reasons to refuse him;  
But what she meets and what she fears  
Are less than are the downward years,  
Drawn slowly to the foamless weirs  
Of age, were she to lose him.

Between a blurred sagacity  
That once had power to sound him,  
And Love, that will not let him be  
The Judas that she found him,  
Her pride assuages her almost,  
As if it were alone the cost.—  
He sees that he will not be lost,  
And waits and looks around him.

A sense of ocean and old trees  
Envelops and allures him;  
Tradition, touching all he sees,  
Beguiles and reassures him;  
And all her doubts of what he says  
Are dimmed with what she knows of days—  
Till even prejudice delays  
And fades, and she secures him.

The falling leaf inaugurates  
The reign of her confusion;  
The pounding wave reverberates  
The dirge of her illusion;

And home, where passion lived and died,  
Becomes a place where she can hide,  
While all the town and harbour side  
Vibrate with her seclusion.

We tell you, tapping on our brows,  
The story as it should be—  
As if the story of a house  
Were told, or ever could be;  
We'll have no kindly veil between  
Her visions and those we have seen—  
As if we guessed what hers have been,  
Or what they are or would be.

Meanwhile we do no harm; for they  
That with a god have striven,  
Not hearing much of what we say,  
Take what the god has given;  
Though like waves breaking it may be,  
Or like a changed familiar tree,  
Or like a stairway to the sea  
Where down the blind are driven.

### *The Gift of God*

BLESSED with a joy that only she  
Of all alive shall ever know,  
She wears a proud humility  
For what it was that willed it so—  
That her degree should be so great  
Among the favoured of the Lord  
That she may scarcely bear the weight  
Of her bewildering reward.

As one apart, immune, alone,  
Or featured for the shining ones,  
And like to none that she has known  
Of other women's other sons—

The firm fruition of her need,  
He shines anointed; and he blurs  
Her vision, till it seems indeed  
A sacrilege to call him hers.

She fears a little for so much  
Of what is best, and hardly dares  
To think of him as one to touch  
With aches, indignities, and cares;  
She sees him rather at the goal,  
Still shining; and her dream foretells  
The proper shining of a soul  
Where nothing ordinary dwells.

Perchance a canvass of the town  
Would find him far from flags and shouts,  
And leave him only the renown  
Of many smiles and many doubts;  
Perchance the crude and common tongue  
Would havoc strangely with his worth;  
But she, with innocence unwrung,  
Would read his name around the earth.

And others, knowing how this youth  
Would shine, if love could make him great,  
When caught and tortured for the truth  
Would only writhe and hesitate;  
While she, arranging for his days  
What centuries could not fulfil,  
Transmutes him with her faith and praise,  
And has him shining where she will.

She crowns him with her gratefulness,  
And says again that life is good;  
And should the gift of God be less  
In him than in her motherhood,  
His fame, though vague, will not be small,  
As upward through her dream he fares,  
Half clouded with a crimson fall  
Of roses thrown on marble stairs.



*For a Dead Lady*

NO more with overflowing light  
Shall fill the eyes that now are faded,  
Nor shall another's fringe with night  
Their woman-hidden world as they did.  
No more shall quiver down the days  
The flowing wonder of her ways,  
Whereof no language may requite  
The shifting and the many-shaded.

The grace, divine, definitive,  
Clings only as a faint forestalling;  
The laugh that love could not forgive  
Is hushed, and answers to no calling;  
The forehead and the little ears  
Have gone where Saturn keeps the years;  
The breast where roses could not live  
Has done with rising and with falling.

The beauty, shattered by the laws  
That have creation in their keeping,  
No longer trembles at applause,  
Or over children that are sleeping;  
And we who delve in beauty's lore  
Know all that we have known before  
Of what inexorable cause  
Makes Time so vicious in his reaping.

*The Man Against the Sky*

BETWEEN me and the sunset, like a dome  
Against the glory of a world on fire,  
Now burned a sudden hill,  
Bleak, round, and high, by flame-lit height made higher,  
With nothing on it for the flame to kill

Save one who moved and was alone up there  
To loom before the chaos and the glare  
As if he were the last god going home  
Unto his last desire.  
Dark, marvellous, and inscrutable he moved on  
Till down the fiery distance he was gone,  
Like one of those eternal, remote things  
That range across a man's imaginings  
When a sure music fills him and he knows  
What he may say thereafter to few men—  
The touch of ages having wrought  
An echo and a glimpse of what he thought  
A phantom or a legend until then;  
For whether lighted over ways that save,  
Or lured from all repose,  
If he go on too far to find a grave,  
Mostly alone he goes.  
Even he, who stood where I had found him,  
On high with fire all round him,  
Who moved along the molten west,  
And over the round hill's crest  
That seemed half ready with him to go down,  
Flame-bitten and flame-cleft,  
As if there were to be no last thing left  
Of a nameless unimaginable town—  
Even he who climbed and vanished may have taken  
Down to the perils of a depth not known,  
From death defended, though by men forsaken,  
The bread that every man must eat alone;  
He may have walked while others hardly dared  
Look on to see him stand where many fell;  
And upward out of that as out of hell,  
He may have sung and striven  
To mount where more of him shall yet be given,  
Bereft of all retreat,  
To sevenfold heat—  
As on a day when three in Dura shared  
The furnace, and were spared  
For glory by that king of Babylon

Who made himself so great that God, who heard,  
Covered him with long feathers, like a bird.  
Again, he may have gone down easily,  
By comfortable altitudes, and found,  
As always, underneath him solid ground  
Whereon to be sufficient and to stand  
Possessed already of the promised land,  
Far stretched and fair to see:  
A good sight, verily,  
And one to make the eyes of her who bore him  
Shine glad with hidden tears.  
Why question of his ease of who before him,  
In one place or another where they left  
Their names as far behind them as their bones,  
And yet by dint of slaughter, toil, and theft,  
And shrewdly sharpened stones,  
Carved hard the way for his ascendancy  
Through deserts of lost years?  
Why trouble him now who sees and hears  
No more than what his innocence requires,  
And therefore to no other height aspires  
Than one at which he neither quails nor tires?  
He may do more by seeing what he sees  
Than others eager for iniquities;  
He may, by seeing all things for the best,  
Incite futurity to do the rest.  
Or with an even likelihood,  
He may have met with atrabilious eyes  
The fires of time on equal terms and passed  
Indifferently down, until at last  
His only kind of grandeur would have been,  
Apparently, in being seen.  
He may have had for evil or for good  
No argument; he may have had no care  
For what without himself went anywhere  
To failure or to glory, and least of all  
For such a stale, flamboyant miracle;  
He may have been the prophet of an art  
Immovable to old idolatries;

He may have been a player without a part,  
Annoyed that even the sun should have the skies  
For such a flaming way to advertise;  
He may have been a painter sick at heart  
With Nature's toiling for a new surprise;  
He may have been a cynic, who now, for all  
Of anything divine that his effete  
Negation may have tasted,  
Saw truth in his own image, rather small,  
Forbore to fever the ephemeral,  
Found any barren height a good retreat  
From any swarming street,  
And in the sun saw power superbly wasted;  
And when the primitive old-fashioned stars  
Came out again to shine on joys and wars  
More primitive, and all arrayed for doom,  
He may have proved a world a sorry thing  
In his imagining,  
And life a lighted highway to the tomb.  
Or, mounting with unfirm unsearching tread,  
His hopes to chaos led,  
He may have stumbled up there from the past,  
And with an aching strangeness viewed the last  
Abysmal conflagration of his dreams—  
A flame where nothing seems  
To burn but flame itself, by nothing fed;  
And while it all went out,  
Not even the faint anodyne of doubt  
May then have eased a painful going down  
From pictured heights of power and lost renown,  
Revealed at length to his outlived endeavour  
Remote and unapproachable forever;  
And at his heart there may have gnawed  
Sick memories of a dead faith foiled and flawed  
And long dishonoured by the living death  
Assigned alike by chance  
To brutes and hierophants;  
And anguish fallen on those he loved around him  
May once have dealt the last blow to confound him,

And so have left him as death leaves a child,  
Who sees it all too near;  
And he who knows no young way to forget  
May struggle to the tomb unreconciled.  
Whatever suns may rise and set  
There may be nothing kinder for him here  
Than shafts and agonies;  
And under these  
He may cry out and stay on horribly;  
Or, seeing in death too small a thing to fear,  
He may go forward like a stoic Roman  
Where pangs and terrors in his pathway lie—  
Or, seizing the swift logic of a woman,  
Curse God and die.

Or maybe there, like many another one  
Who might have stood aloft and looked ahead,  
Black-drawn against wild red,  
He may have built unawed by fiery gules  
That in him no commotion stirred,  
A living reason out of molecules  
Why molecules occurred,  
And one for smiling when he might have sighed  
Had he seen far enough,  
And in the same inevitable stuff  
Discovered an odd reason too for pride  
In being what he must have been by laws  
Infrangible and for no kind of cause.  
Deterred by no confusion or surprise  
He may have seen with his mechanic eyes  
A world without a meaning, and had room,  
Alone amid magnificence and doom,  
To build himself an airy monument  
That should, or fail him in his vague intent,  
Outlast an accidental universe—  
To call it nothing worse—  
Or, by the burrowing guile  
Of Time disintegrated and effaced,  
Like once-remembered mighty trees go down

To ruin, of which by man may now be traced  
No part sufficient even to be rotten,  
And in the book of things that are forgotten  
Is entered as a thing not quite worth while.  
He may have been so great  
That satraps would have shivered at his frown,  
And all he prized alive may rule a state  
No larger than a grave that holds a clown;  
He may have been a master of his fate,  
And of his atoms—ready as another  
In his emergence to exonerate  
His father and his mother;  
He may have been a captain of a host,  
Self-elocuent and ripe for prodigies,  
Doomed here to swell by dangerous degrees,  
And then give up the ghost.  
Nahum's great grasshoppers were such as these,  
Sun-scattered and soon lost.

Whatever the dark road he may have taken,  
This man who stood on high  
And faced alone the sky,  
Whatever drove or lured or guided him—  
A vision answering a faith unshaken,  
An easy trust assumed by easy trials,  
A sick negation born of weak denials,  
A crazed abhorrence of an old condition,  
A blind attendance on a brief ambition—  
Whatever stayed him or derided him,  
His way was even as ours;  
And we, with all our wounds and all our powers,  
Must each await alone at his own height  
Another darkness or another light;  
And there, of our poor self dominion reft,  
If inference and reason shun  
Hell, Heaven, and Oblivion,  
May thwarted will (perforce precarious,  
But for our conservation better thus)  
Have no misgivings left

Of doing yet what here we leave undone?  
Or if unto the last of these we cleave,  
Believing or protesting we believe  
In such an idle and ephemeral  
Florescence of the diabolical—  
If, robbed of two fond old enormities,  
Our being had no onward auguries,  
What then were this great love of ours to say  
For launching other lives to voyage again  
A little farther into time and pain,  
A little faster in a futile chase  
For a kingdom and a power and a Race  
That would have still in sight  
A manifest end of ashes and eternal night?  
Is this the music of the toys we shake  
So loud—as if there might be no mistake  
Somewhere in our indomitable will?  
Are we no greater than the noise we make  
Along our blind atomic pilgrimage  
Whereon by crass chance billeted we go  
Because our brains and bones and cartilage  
Will have it so?  
If this we say, then let us all be still  
About our share in it, and live and die  
More quietly thereby.

Where was he going, this man against the sky?  
You know not, nor do I.  
But this we know, if we know anything:  
That we may laugh and fight and sing  
And of our transience here make offering  
To an orient Word that will not be erased,  
Or, save in incommunicable gleams  
Too permanent for dreams,  
Be found or known.  
No tonic or ambitious irritant  
Of increase or of want  
Has made an otherwise insensate waste  
Of ages overthrown

A ruthless, veiled, implacable foretaste  
Of other ages that are still to be  
Depleted and rewarded variously  
Because a few, by fate's economy,  
Shall seem to move the world the way it goes;  
No soft evangel of equality,  
Safe-cradled in a communal repose  
That huddles into death and may at last  
Be covered well with equatorial snows—  
And all for what, the devil only knows—  
Will aggregate an inkling to confirm  
The credit of a sage or of a worm,  
Or tell us why one man in five  
Should have a care to stay alive  
While in his heart he feels no violence  
Laid on his humour and intelligence  
When infant Science makes a pleasant face  
And waves again that hollow toy, the Race;  
No planetary trap where souls are wrought  
For nothing but the sake of being caught  
And sent again to nothing will attune  
Itself to any key of any reason  
Why man should hunger through another season  
To find out why 'twere better late than soon  
To go away and let the sun and moon  
And all the silly stars illuminate  
A place for creeping things,  
And those that root and trumpet and have wings,  
And herd and ruminate,  
Or dive and flash and poise in rivers and seas,  
Or by their loyal tails in lofty trees  
Hang screeching lewd victorious derision  
Of man's immortal vision.  
Shall we, because Eternity records  
Too vast an answer for the time-born words  
We spell, whereof so many are dead that once  
In our capricious lexicons  
Were so alive and final, hear no more  
The Word itself, the living word



That none alive has ever heard  
Or ever spelt,  
And few have ever felt  
Without the fears and old surrenderings  
And terrors that began  
When Death let fall a feather from his wings  
And humbled the first man?  
Because the weight of our humility,  
Wherefrom we gain  
A little wisdom and much pain,  
Falls here too sore and there too tedious,  
Are we in anguish or complacency,  
Not looking far enough ahead  
To see by what mad couriers we are led  
Along the roads of the ridiculous,  
To pity ourselves and laugh at faith  
And while we curse life bear it?  
And if we see the soul's dead end in death,  
Are we to fear it?  
What folly is here that has not yet a name  
Unless we say outright that we are liars?  
What have we seen beyond our sunset fires  
That lights again the way by which we came?  
Why pay we such a price, and one we give  
So clamouringly, for each racked empty day  
That leads one more last human hope away,  
As quiet fiends would lead past our crazed eyes  
Our children to an unseen sacrifice?  
If after all that we have lived and thought,  
All comes to Nought—  
If there be nothing after Now,  
And we be nothing anyhow,  
And we know that—why live?  
'Twere sure but weaklings' vain distress  
To suffer dungeons where so many doors  
Will open on the cold eternal shores  
That look sheer down  
To the dark tideless floods of Nothingness  
Where all who know may drown.

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ANNA HEMPSTEAD BRANCH

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*The Monk in the Kitchen*

## I

ORDER is a lovely thing;  
On disarray it lays its wing,  
Teaching simplicity to sing.  
It has a meek and lowly grace,  
Quiet as a nun's face.  
Lo—I will have thee in this place!  
Tranquil well of deep delight,  
All things that shine through thee appear  
As stones through water, sweetly clear.  
Thou clarity,  
That with angelic charity  
Revealest beauty where thou art,  
Spread thyself like a clean pool,  
Then all the things that in thee are,  
Shall seem more spiritual and fair,  
Reflection from serener air—  
Sunken shapes of many a star  
In the high heavens set afar.

## II

Ye stolid, homely, visible things,  
Above you all brood glorious wings  
Of your deep entities, set high,  
Like slow moons in a hidden sky.  
But you, their likenesses, are spent  
Upon another element.

Truly ye are but seemings—  
The shadowy cast-off gleamings  
Of bright solidities. Ye seem  
Soft as water, vague as dream;  
Image, cast in a shifting stream.

## III

What are ye?  
I know not.  
Brazen pan and iron pot,  
Yellow brick and gray flag-stone  
That my feet have trod upon—  
Ye seem to me  
Vessels of bright mystery.  
For ye do bear a shape, and so  
Though ye were made by man, I know  
An inner Spirit also made,  
And ye his breathings have obeyed.

## IV

Shape, the strong and awful spirit,  
Laid his ancient hand on you.  
He waste chaos doth inherit;  
He can alter and subdue.  
Verily, he doth lift up  
Matter, like a sacred cup.  
Into deep substance he reached, and io  
Where ye were not, ye were; and so  
Out of useless nothing, ye  
Groaned and laughed and came to be.  
And I use you, as I can,  
Wonderful uses, made for man,  
Iron pot and brazen pan.

## V

What are ye?  
I know not;  
Nor what I really do  
When I move and govern you.  
There is no small work unto God.  
He required of us greatness;  
Of His least creature  
A high angelic nature,  
Stature superb and bright completeness,  
He sets to us no humble duty.  
Each act that He would have us do  
Is haloed round with strangest beauty;  
Terrific deeds and cosmic tasks  
Of His plainest child He asks.  
When I polish the brazen pan  
I hear a creature laugh afar  
In the gardens of a star,  
And from his burning presence run  
Flaming wheels of many a sun.  
Whoever makes a thing more bright,  
He is an angel of all light.  
When I cleanse this earthen floor  
My spirit leaps to see  
Bright garments trailing over it,  
A cleanness made by me.  
Purger of all men's thoughts and ways,  
With labour do I sound Thy praise,  
My work is done for Thee.  
Whoever makes a thing more bright,  
He is an angel of all light.  
Therefore let me spread abroad  
The beautiful cleanness of my God.

## VI

One time in the cool of dawn  
Angels came and worked with me.

The air was soft with many a wing.  
 They laughed amid my solitude  
 And cast bright looks on everything.  
 Sweetly of me did they ask  
 That they might do my common task.  
 And all were beautiful—but One  
 With garments whiter than the sun  
 Had such a face  
 Of deep, remembered grace;  
 That when I saw I cried—"Thou art  
 The great Blood-Brother of my heart.  
 Where have I seen Thee?"—And He said,  
 "When we are dancing round God's throne,  
 How often thou art there.  
 Beauties from thy hands have flown  
 Like white doves wheeling in mid air.  
 Nay—thy soul remembers not?  
 Work on, and cleanse thy iron pot."

## VII

What are we? I know not.

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GEORGE SANTAYANA

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*Solipsism*

I COULD believe that I am here alone,  
 And all the world my dream;  
 The passion of the scene is all my own,  
 And things that seem but seem.

Perchance an exhalation of my sorrow  
 Hath raised this vaporous show,

For whence but from my soul should all things borrow  
So deep a tinge of woe?

I keep the secret doubt within my breast  
To be the gods' defence,  
To ease the heart by too much ruth oppressed  
And drive the horror hence.

O sorrow that the patient brute should cower  
And die, not having sinned!  
O pity that the wild and fragile flower  
Should shiver in the wind!

Then were I dreaming dreams I know not of,  
For that is part of me  
That feels the piercing pang of grief and love  
And doubts eternally.

But whether all to me the vision come  
Or break in many beams,  
The pageant ever shifts, and being's sum  
Is but the sum of dreams.

### *Odes*

#### I

WHAT god will choose me from this labouring nation  
To worship him afar, with inward gladness,  
At sunset and at sunrise, in some Persian  
Garden of roses;

Or under the full moon, in rapturous silence,  
Charmed by the trickling fountain, and the moaning  
Of the death-hallowed cypress, and the myrtle  
Hallowed by Venus?

O for a chamber in an eastern tower,  
Spacious and empty, roofed in odorous cedar,  
A silken soft divan, a woven carpet  
    Rich, many-coloured;

A jug that, poised on her firm head, a Negress  
Fetched from the well; a window to the ocean,  
Lest of the stormy world too deep seclusion  
    Make me forgetful!

Thence I might watch the vessel-bearing waters  
Beat the slow pulses of the life eternal,  
Bringing of nature's universal travail  
    Infinite echoes;

And there at even I might stand and listen  
To thrum of distant lutes and dying voices  
Chanting the ditty an Arabian captive  
    Sang to Darius.

So would I dream awhile, and ease a little  
The soul long stifled and the straitened spirit,  
Tasting new pleasures in a far-off country  
    Sacred to beauty.

## II

My heart rebels against my generation,  
That talks of freedom and is slave to riches,  
And, toiling 'neath each day's ignoble burden,  
    Boasts of the morrow.

No space for noonday rest or midnight watches,  
No purest joy of breathing under heaven!  
Wretched themselves, they heap, to make them happy,  
    Many possessions.

But thou, O silent Mother, wise, immortal,  
To whom our toil is laughter,—take, divine one,

This vanity away, and to thy lover  
Give what is needful:—

## III

Gathering the echoes of forgotten wisdom,  
And mastered by a proud, adventurous purpose,  
Columbus sought the golden shores of India  
Opposite Europe.

He gave the world another world, and ruin  
Brought upon blameless, river-loving nations,  
Cursed Spain with barren gold, and made the Andes  
Fiefs of Saint Peter;

While in the cheerless North the thrifty Saxon  
Planted his corn, and, narrowing his bosom,  
Made covenant with God, and by keen virtue  
Trebled his riches.

What venture hast thou left us, bold Columbus?  
What honour left thy brothers, brave Magellan?  
Daily the children of the rich for pastime  
Circle the planet.

And what good comes to us of all your dangers?  
A smaller earth and smaller hope of heaven.  
Ye have but cheapened gold, and, measuring ocean,  
Counted the islands.

No Ponce de Leon shall drink in fountains,  
On any flowering Easter, youth eternal;  
No Cortes look upon another ocean;  
No Alexander

Found in the Orient dim a boundless kingdom,  
And, clothing his Greek strength with barbarous splendour,  
Build by the sea his throne, while Sacred Egypt  
Honours his godhead.



The earth, the mother once of godlike Theseus  
And mighty Heracles, at length is weary,  
And now brings forth a spawn of antlike creatures,  
    Blackening her valleys,

Inglorious in their birth and in their living,  
Curious and querulous, afraid of battle,  
Rummaging earth for coals, in camps of hovels  
    Crouching from winter,

As if grim fate, amid our boastful prating,  
Made us the image of our brutish fathers,  
When from their caves they issued, crazed with terror,  
    Howling and hungry.

For all things come about in sacred cycles,  
And life brings death, and light eternal darkness,  
And now the world grows old apace; its glory  
    Passes for ever.

Perchance the earth will yet for many ages  
Bear her dead child, her moon, around her orbit;  
Strange craft may tempt the ocean streams, new forests  
    Cover the mountains.

If in those latter days men still remember  
Our wisdom and our travail and our sorrow,  
They never can be happy, with that burden  
    Heavy upon them,

Knowing the hideous past, the blood, the famine,  
The ancestral hate, the eager faith's disaster,  
All ending in their little lives, and vulgar  
    Circle of troubles.

But if they have forgot us, and the shifting  
Of sands has buried deep our thousand cities,  
Fell superstition then will seize upon them;  
    Protean error,

Will fill their panting heart with sickly phantoms  
Of sudden blinding good and monstrous evil;  
There will be miracles again, and torment,  
Dungeon and fagot,—

Until the patient earth, made dry and barren,  
Sheds all her herbage in a final winter,  
And the gods turn their eyes to some far distant  
Bright constellation.

## IV

Slowly the black earth gains upon the yellow,  
And the caked hill-side is ribbed soft with furrows.  
Turn now again, with voice and staff, my ploughman,  
Guiding thy oxen.

Lift the great ploughshare, clear the stones and brambles,  
Plant it the deeper, with thy foot upon it,  
Uprooting all the flowering weeds that bring not  
Food to thy children.

Patience is good for man and beast, and labour  
Hardens to sorrow and the frost of winter,  
Turn then, again, in the brave hope of harvest,  
Singing to heaven.

## V

Of thee the Northman by his beachèd galley  
Dreamt, as he watched the never-setting Ursa  
And longed for summer and thy light, O sacred  
Mediterranean.

Unseen he loved thee; for the heart within him  
Knew earth had gardens where he might be blessed,  
Putting away long dreams and aimless, barbarous  
Hunger for battle.

The foretaste of thy languors thawed his bosom;  
A great need drove him to thy caverned islands  
From the gray, endless reaches of the outer  
Desert of Ocean.

He saw thy pillars, saw thy sudden mountains  
Wrinkled and stark, and in their crooked gorges,  
'Neath peeping pine and cypress, guessed the torrent  
Smothered in flowers.

Thine incense to the sun, thy gathered vapours,  
He saw suspended on the flanks of Taurus,  
Or veiling the snowed bosom of the virgin  
Sister of Atlas.

He saw the luminous top of wide Olympus,  
Fit for the happy gods; he saw the pilgrim  
River, with rains of Ethiopia flooding  
Populous Egypt.

And having seen, he loved thee. His racked spirit,  
By thy breath tempered and the light that clothes thee,  
Forgot the monstrous gods, and made of Nature  
Mistress and mother.

The more should I, O fatal sea, before thee  
Of alien words make echoes to thy music;  
For I was born where first the rills of Tagus  
Turn to the westward.

And wandering long, alas! have need of drinking  
Deep of the patience of thy perfect sadness,  
O thou that constant through the change of ages,  
Beautiful ever,

Never wast wholly young and void of sorrows,  
Nor ever canst be old, while yet the morning  
Kindles thy ripples, or the golden evening  
Dyes thee in purple.

Thee, willing to be tamed but still untamable,  
The Roman called his own until he perished,  
As now the busy English hover o'er thee,  
Stalwart and noble;

But all is naught to thee, while no harsh winter  
Congeals thy fountains, and the blown Sahara  
Chokes not with dreadful sand thy deep and placid  
Rock-guarded havens.

Thou carest not what men may tread thy margin;  
Nor I, while from some heather-scented headland  
I may behold thy beauty, the eternal  
Solace of mortals.

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TRUMBULL STICKNEY

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*Be Still. The Hanging Gardens Were a Dream*

**B**E still. The Hanging Gardens were a dream  
That over Persian roses flew to kiss  
The curlèd lashes of Semiramis.  
Troy never was, nor green Skamander stream.  
Provence and Troubadour are merest lies,  
The glorious hair of Venice was a beam  
Made within Titian's eye. The sunsets seem,  
The world is very old and nothing is.  
Be still. Thou foolish thing, thou canst not wake,  
Nor thy tears wedge thy soldered lids apart,  
But patter in the darkness of thy heart.  
Thy brain is plagued. Thou art a frightened owl  
Blind with the light of life thou'ldst not forsake,  
And error loves and nourishes thy soul.

*Live Blindly*

LIVE blindly and upon the hour. The Lord,  
Who was the Future, died full long ago.  
Knowledge which is the Past is folly. Go,  
Poor child, and be not to thyself abhorred.  
Around thine earth sun-wingèd winds do blow  
And planets roll; a meteor draws his sword;  
The rainbow breaks his seven-coloured chord  
And the long strips of river-silver flow:  
Awake! Give thyself to the lovely hours.  
Drinking their lips, catch thou the dream in flight  
About their fragile hairs' aërial gold.  
Thou art divine, thou livest,—as of old  
Apollo springing naked to the light,  
And all his island shivered into flowers.

*He Said: "If in His Image I Was Made"*

HE said: "If in his image I was made,  
I am his equal and across the land  
We two should make our journey hand in hand  
Like brothers dignified and unafraid."  
And God that day was walking in the shade.  
To whom he said: "The world is idly planned,  
We cross each other, let us understand  
Thou who thou art, I who I am," he said.  
Darkness came down. And all that night was heard  
Tremendous clamour and the broken roar  
Of things in turmoil driven down before.  
Then silence. Morning broke, and sang a bird.  
He lay upon the earth, his bosom stirred;  
But God was seen no longer any more.

*On Some Shells Found Inland*

THESE are my murmur-laden shells that keep  
A fresh voice tho' the years lie very gray.  
The wave that washed their lips and tuned their lay  
Is gone, gone with the faded ocean sweep,  
The royal tide, gray ebb and sunken neap  
And purple midday,—gone! To this hot clay  
Must sing my shells, where yet the primal day,  
Its roar and rhythm and splendour will not sleep.  
What hand shall join them to their proper sea  
If all be gone? Shall they forever feel  
Glories undone and worlds that cannot be?—  
'T were mercy to stamp out this aged wrong,  
Dash them to earth and crunch them with the heel  
And make a dust of their seraphic song.

*In Ampezzo*

ONLY once more and not again—the larches  
Shake to the wind their echo, "Not again,"—  
We see, below the sky that over-arches  
Heavy and blue, the plain

Between Tofana lying and Cristallo  
In meadowy earths above the ringing stream:  
Whence interchangeably desire may follow,  
Hesitant as in dream,

At sunset, south, by lilac promontories  
Under green skies to Italy, or forth  
By calms of morning beyond Lavinores  
Tyrolward and to north:

As now, this last of latter days, when over  
The brownish field by peasants are undone  
Some widths of grass, some plots of mountain clover  
Under the autumn sun,

With honey-warm perfume that risen lingers  
In mazes of low heat, or takes the air,  
Passing delicious as a woman's fingers  
Passing amid the hair;

When scythes are swishing and the mower's muscle  
Spans a repeated crescent to and fro,  
Or in dry stalks of corn the sickles rustle,  
Tangle, detach and go,

Far thro' the wide blue day and greenning meadow  
Whose blots of amber beaded are with sheaves,  
Whereover pallidly a cloud-shadow  
Deadens the earth and leaves:

Whilst high around and near, their heads of iron  
Sunken in sky whose azure overlights  
Ravine and edges, stand the gray and maron  
Desolate Dolomites,—

And older than decay from the small summit  
Unfolds a stream of pebbly wreckage down  
Under the suns of midday, like some comet  
Struck into gravel stone.

Faintly across this gold and amethystine  
September, images of summer fade;  
And gentle dreams now freshen on the pristine  
Viols, awhile unplayed,

Of many a place where lovingly we wander,  
More dearly held that quickly we forsake,—  
A pine by sullen coasts, an oleander  
Reddening on the lake.

And there, each year with more familiar motion,  
From many a bird and windy forestries,  
Or along shaking fringes of the ocean  
Vapours of music rise.

From many easts the morning gives her splendour;  
The shadows fill with colours we forget;  
Remembered tints at evening grow tender,  
Tarnished with violet.

Let us away! soon sheets of winter metal  
On this discoloured mountain-land will close,  
While elsewhere Spring-time weaves a crimson petal,  
Builds and perfumes a rose.

Away! for here the mountain sinks in gravel.  
Let us forget the unhappy site with change,  
And go, if only happiness be travel  
After the new and strange:—

Unless 'twere better to be very single,  
To follow some diviner monotone,  
And in all beauties, where ourselves commingle,  
Love but a love, but one,

Across this shadowy minute of our living,  
What time our hearts so magically sing,  
To mitigate our fever, simply giving  
All in a little thing?

Just as here, past yon dumb and melancholy  
Sameness of ruin, while the mountains ail,  
Summer and sunset-coloured autumn slowly  
Dissipate down the vale;

And all these lines along the sky that measure,  
Sorapis and the rocks of Mezzodi  
Crumble by foamy miles into the azure  
Mediterranean sea:

Whereas to-day at sunrise, under brambles,  
A league above the moss and dying pines  
I picked this little—in my hand that trembles—  
Parcel of columbines.



*Now in the Palace Gardens*

NOW in the palace gardens warm with age,  
On lawn and flower-bed this afternoon  
The thin November-coloured foliage  
Just as last year unfastens liting down,

And round the terrace in gray attitude  
The very statues are becoming sere  
With long presentiment of solitude.  
Most of the life that I have lived is here,

Here by the path and autumn's earthy grass  
And chestnuts standing down the breadths of sky:  
Indeed I know not how it came to pass,  
The life I lived here so unhappily.

Yet blessing over all! I do not care  
What wormwood I have ate to cups of gall;  
I care not what despairs are buried there  
Under the ground, no, I care not at all.

Nay, if the heart have beaten, let it break!  
I have not loved and lived but only this  
Betwixt my birth and grave. Dear Spirit, take  
The gratitude that pains so deep it is.

When Spring shall be again, and at your door  
You stand to feel the mellow evening wind,  
Remember if you will my heart is pure,  
Perfectly pure and altogether kind;

How much it aches to linger in these things!  
I thought the perfect end of love was peace  
Over the long-forgiven sufferings.  
But something else, I know not what it is,

The words that came so nearly and then not,  
The vanity, the error of the whole,  
The strong cross-purpose, oh, I know not what  
Cries dreadfully in the distracted soul.

The evening fills the garden, hardly red;  
And autumn goes away, like one alone.  
Would I were with the leaves that thread by thread  
Softened to soil, I would that I were one.

### *Fidelity*

NOT lost or won but above all endeavour  
Thy life like heaven circles around mine;  
Thy eyes it seems upon my eyes did shine  
Since forever.

For aught he summon up his earliest hour  
No man remembers the surprise of day,  
Nor where he saw with virgin wonder play  
The first flower.

And o'er the imagination's last horizon  
No brain has leaning descried nothing more:  
Still there are stars and in the night before  
More have arisen.

Not won or lost is unto thee my being;  
Our eyes were always so together met.  
If mine should close, if ever thine forget,  
Time is dying.

### *At Sainte-Marguerite*

THE gray tide flows and flounders in the rocks  
Along the crannies up the swollen sand.

Far out the reefs lie naked—dunes and blocks  
Low in the watery wind. A shaft of land  
Going to sea thins out the western strand.

It rains, and all along and always gulls  
Career sea-screaming in and weather-glossed.  
It blows here, pushing round the cliff; in lulls  
Within the humid stone a motion lost  
Ekes out the flurried heart-beat of the coast.

It blows and rains a pale and whirling mist  
This summer morning. I that hither came—  
Was it to pluck this savage from the schist.  
This crazy yellowish bloom without a name,  
With leathern blade and tortured wiry frame?

Why here alone, away, the forehead pricked  
With dripping salt and fingers damp with brine,  
Before the offal and the derelict  
And where the hungry sea-wolves howl and whine  
Like human hours? now that the columbine

Stands somewhere shaded near the fields that fall  
Great starry sheaves of the delighted year,  
And globing rosy on the garden wall  
The peach and apricot and soon the pear  
Drip in the teasing hand their sugared tear.

Inland a little way the summer lies.  
Inland a little and but yesterday  
I saw the weary teams, I heard the cries  
Of sicklemen across the fallen hay,  
And buried in the sunburned stacks I lay

Tasting the straws and tossing, laughing soft  
Into the sky's great eyes of gold and blue  
And nodding to the breezy leaves aloft  
Over the harvest's mellow residue.  
But sudden then—then strangely dark it grew.

How good it is, before the dreary flow  
Of cloud and water, here to lie alone  
And in this desolation to let go  
Down the ravine one with another, down  
Across the surf to linger or to drown

The loves that none can give and none receive,  
The fearful asking and the small retort,  
The life to dream of and the dream to live!  
Very much more is nothing than a part,  
Nothing at all and darkness in the heart.

I would my manhood now were like the sea.—  
Thou at high-tide, when compassing the land  
Thou find'st the issue short, questioningly  
A moment poised, thy floods then down the strand  
Sink without rancour, sink without command,

Sink of themselves in peace without despair,  
And turn as still the calm horizon turns,  
Till they repose little by little nowhere  
And the long light unfathomable burns  
Clear from the zenith stars to the sea-ferns.

Thou art thy Priest, thy Victim and thy God.  
Thy life is bulwarked with a thread of foam,  
And of the sky, the mountains and the sod  
Thou askest nothing, evermore at home  
In thy own self's perennial masterdom.

### *Leave Him Now Quiet*

LEAVE him now quiet by the way  
To rest apart.  
I know what draws him to the dust alway  
And churns him in the builder's lime:  
He has the fright of time.

I heard it knocking in his breast  
A minute since;  
His human eyes did wince,  
He stubborned like the massive slaughter beast  
And as a thing o'erwhelmed with sound  
Stood bolted to the ground.

Leave him, for rest alone can cure—  
If cure there be—  
This waif upon the sea.  
He is of those who slanted the great door  
And listened—wretched little lad—  
To what they said.

### *Near Helikon*

BY such an all-embalming summer day  
As sweetens now among the mountain pines  
Down to the cornland yonder and the vines,  
To where the sky and sea are mixed in gray,  
How do all things together take their way  
Harmonious to the harvest, bringing wines  
And bread and light and whatso'er combines  
In the large wreath to make it round and gay.  
To me my troubled life doth now appear  
Like scarce distinguishable summits hung  
Around the blue horizon: places where  
Not even a traveller purposeth to steer,—  
Whereof a migrant bird in passing sung,  
And the girl closed her window not to hear.

### *In Ampezzo (II.)*

IN days of summer let me go  
Up over fields, at afternoon,  
And, lying low against my stone

On slopes the scythe has pain to mow,  
Look southward a long hour alone.

For evening there is lovelier  
Than vision or enchanted tale:  
When wefts of yellow vapour pale,  
And green goes down to lavender  
On rosy cliffs, shutting the vale

Whose smoke of violet forest seeks  
The steep and rock, where crimson crawls,  
And drenched with carmine fire their walls  
Go thinly smouldering to the peaks,  
High, while the sun now somewhere falls;

Except a cloud-caught ochre spark  
In one last summit,—and away  
On lazy wings of mauve and gray,  
Away and near, like memory, dark  
Is bluish with the filmy day,

What time the swallows flying few  
Over uncoloured fields become  
Small music thro' the shining dome;  
And sleepy leaves are feeling dew  
Above the crickets' under-hum,

In bye-tone to a savage sound  
Of waters that with discord smite  
The frigid wind and lurking light,  
And swarm behind the gloom, and bound  
Down sleepy valleys to the night:

And thoughts delicious of the whole,  
Gathering over all degrees,  
Yet sad for something more than these,  
Across low meadow-lands of soul  
Grow large, like north-lights no one sees.

I care not if the painter wrought  
The tinted dream his spirit hid,  
When rich with sight he saw, amid  
A jarring world, one tone, and caught  
The colour passing to his lid.

Be still musician and thy choir!  
Where trumpets blare and the bow stings  
In symphony a thousand strings  
To cry of wood-wind and desire  
Of one impassioned voice that sings.

Nay, silence have the poet's mode  
And southern vowels all! let die,  
So ghostly-vague, the northern cry!—  
This world is better than an ode  
And evening more than elegy.—

Yet what shall singing do for me?  
How shall a verse be crimsoned o'er?  
I ever dream one art the more;  
I who did never paint would see  
The colour painters languish for,

And wisely use the instruments  
That earlier harmony affords;  
I dream a poesy of chords  
Embroidered very rich in tints:  
'Tis not enough, this work of words.

A wilder thing inflames our hearts.  
We do refuse to sift and share.  
For we would musically bear  
The burden of the gathered arts  
Together which divided were,

And, passing Knowledge, highly rear  
Upon her iron architrave  
These airy images we crave,—  
Lest wholly vain and fallen sheer  
Our vision dress us for the grave.

*Mnemosyne*

IT'S autumn in the country I remember.

How warm a wind blew here about the ways!  
And shadows on the hillside lay to slumber  
During the long sun-sweetened summer-days.

It's cold abroad the country I remember.

The swallows veering skimmed the golden grain  
At midday with a wing aslant and limber;  
And yellow cattle browsed upon the plain.

It's empty down the country I remember.

I had a sister lovely in my sight:  
Her hair was dark, her eyes were very sombre;  
We sang together in the woods at night.

It's lonely in the country I remember.

The babble of our children fills my ears,  
And on our hearth I stare the perished ember  
To flames that show all starry thro' my tears.

It's dark about the country I remember.

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AMY LOWELL

---

*Little Ivory Figures Pulled with String*

IS it the tinkling of mandolins which disturbs you?  
Or the dropping of bitter-orange petals among the coffee-cups?



Or the slow creeping of the moonlight between the olive-trees?  
*Drop! drop! the rain*  
*Upon the thin plates of my heart.*

String your blood to chord with this music,  
Stir your heels upon the cobbles to the rhythm of a dance-tune.  
They have slim thighs and arms of silver;  
The moon washes away their garments;  
They make a pattern of fleeing feet in the branch shadows,  
And the green grapes knotted about them  
Burst as they press against one another.  
*The rain knocks upon the plates of my heart,*  
*They are crumpled with its beating.*

Would you drink only from your brains, Old Man?  
See, the moonlight has reached your knees,  
It falls upon your head in an accolade of silver.  
Rise up on the music,  
Fling against the moon-drifts in a whorl of young light bodies:  
Leaping grape-clusters,  
Vine leaves tearing from a grey wall.  
You shall run, laughing, in a braid of women,  
And weave flowers with the frosty spines of thorns.  
Why do you gaze into your glass,  
And jar the spoons with your finger-tapping?  
*The rain is rigid on the plates of my heart.*  
*The murmur of it is loud—loud.*

### *The City of Falling Leaves*

LEAVES fall,  
Brown leaves,  
Yellow leaves streaked with brown.  
They fall,  
Flutter,  
Fall again.  
The brown leaves,  
And the streaked yellow leaves,

Loosen on their branches  
And drift slowly downwards.  
One,  
One, two, three,  
One, two, five.  
All Venice is a falling of Autumn leaves—  
Brown,  
And yellow streaked with brown.

"That sonnet, *Abate*,  
Beautiful,  
I am quite exhausted by it.  
Your phrases turn about my heart  
And stifle me to swooning.  
Open the window, I beg.  
Lord! What a strumming of fiddles and mandolins!  
'Tis really a shame to stop indoors.  
Call my maid, or I will make you lace me yourself.  
Fie, how hot it is, not a breath of air!  
See how straight the leaves are falling.  
Marianna, I will have the yellow satin caught up with silver  
fringe,  
It peeps out delightfully from under a mantle.  
Am I well painted to-day, *caro Abate mio*?  
You will be proud of me at the *Ridotto*, hey?  
Proud of being *Cavalier Servente* to such a lady?"  
"Can you doubt it, *Bellissima Contessa*?  
A pinch more rouge on the right cheek,  
And Venus herself shines less. . ."  
"You bore me, *Abate*,  
I vow I must change you!  
A letter, Achmet?  
Run and look out of the window, *Abate*.  
I will read my letter in peace."  
The little black slave with the yellow satin turban  
Gazes at his mistress with strained eyes.  
His yellow turban and black skin  
Are gorgeous—barbaric.  
The yellow satin dress with its silver flashings

Lies on a chair  
Beside a black mantle and a black mask.  
Yellow and black,  
Gorgeous—barbaric.  
The lady reads her letter,  
And the leaves drift slowly  
Past the long windows.  
“How silly you look, my dear *Abate*,  
With that great brown leaf in your wig.  
Pluck it off, I beg you,  
Or I shall die of laughing.”  
A yellow wall  
Aflare in the sunlight,  
Chequered with shadows,  
Shadows of vine leaves,  
Shadows of masks.  
Masks coming, printing themselves for an instant,  
Then passing on,  
More masks always replacing them.  
Masks with tricorns and rapiers sticking out behind  
Pursuing masks with plumes and high heels,  
The sunlight shining under their insteps.  
One,  
One, two,  
One, two, three,  
There is a thronging of shadows on the hot wall,  
Filigreed at the top with moving leaves.  
Yellow sunlight and black shadows,  
Yellow and black,  
Gorgeous—barbaric.  
Two masks stand together,  
And the shadow of a leaf falls through them,  
Marking the wall where they are not.  
From hat-tip to shoulder-tip,  
From elbow to sword-hilt,  
The leaf falls.  
The shadows mingle,  
Blur together,  
Slide along the wall and disappear.

Gold of mosaics and candles,  
And night blackness lurking in the ceiling beams.  
Saint Mark's glitters with flames and reflections.  
A cloak brushes aside,  
And the yellow of satin  
Licks out over the coloured inlays of the pavement.  
Under the gold crucifixes  
There is a meeting of hands  
Reaching from black mantles.  
Sighing embraces, bold investigations,  
Hide in confessionals,  
Sheltered by the shuffling of feet.  
Gorgeous—barbaric  
In its mail of jewels and gold,  
Saint Mark's looks down at the swarm of black masks;  
And outside in the palace gardens brown leaves fall,  
Flutter,  
Fall.  
Brown.  
And yellow streaked with brown.  
Blue-black, the sky over Venice,  
With a pricking of yellow stars.  
There is no moon,  
And the waves push darkly against the prow  
Of the gondola,  
Coming from Malamocco  
And streaming toward Venice.  
It is black under the gondola hood,  
But the yellow of a satin dress  
Glares out like the eye of a watching tiger.  
Yellow compassed about with darkness,  
Yellow and black,  
Gorgeous—barbaric.  
The boatman sings,  
It is Tasso that he sings;  
The lovers seek each other beneath their mantles,  
And the gondola drifts over the lagoon, aslant to the coming  
dawn.  
But at Malamocco in front,

In Venice behind,  
Fall the leaves,  
Brown,  
And yellow streaked with brown.  
They fall,  
Flutter,  
Fall.

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ROBERT FROST

---

*The Road Not Taken*

TWO roads diverged in a yellow wood,  
And sorry I could not travel both  
And be one traveller, long I stood  
And looked down one as far as I could  
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other, as just as fair,  
And having perhaps the better claim,  
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;  
Though as for that the passing there  
Had worn them really about the same,

And both that morning equally lay  
In leaves no step had trodden black.  
Oh, I kept the first for another day!  
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,  
I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh  
Somewhere ages and ages hence:  
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—  
I took the one less travelled by,  
And that has made all the difference.

*Home Burial*

HE saw her from the bottom of the stairs  
Before she saw him. She was starting down,  
Looking back over her shoulder at some fear.  
She took a doubtful step and then undid it  
To raise herself and look again. He spoke  
Advancing toward her: "What is it you see  
From up there always—for I want to know."  
She turned and sank upon her skirts at that,  
And her face changed from terrified to dull.  
He said to gain time: "What is it you see?"  
Mounting until she cowered under him,  
"I will find out now—you must tell me, dear."  
She, in her place, refused him any help  
With the least stiffening of her neck and silence.  
She let him look, sure that he wouldn't see,  
Blind creature; and a while he didn't see.  
But at last he murmured, "Oh," and again, "Oh."  
"What is it—what?" she said.

"Just that I see."  
"You don't," she challenged. "Tell me what it is."

"The wonder is I didn't see at once.  
I never noticed it from here before.  
I must be wonted to it—that's the reason.  
The little graveyard where my people are!  
So small the window frames the whole of it.  
Not so much larger than a bedroom, is it?  
There are three stones of slate and one of marble,  
Broad-shouldered little slabs there in the sunlight  
On the sidehill. We haven't to mind *those*.  
But I understand: it is not the stones,  
But the child's mound——"

"Don't, don't, don't, don't," she cried.

She withdrew shrinking from beneath his arm  
That rested on the banister, and slid downstairs;  
And turned on him with such a daunting look,  
He said twice over before he knew himself:  
"Can't a man speak of his own child he's lost?"

"Not you! Oh, where's my hat? Oh, I don't need it!  
I must get out of here. I must get air.  
I don't know rightly whether any man can."

"Amy! Don't go to someone else this time.  
Listen to me. I won't come down the stairs."  
He sat and fixed his chin between his fists.  
"There's something I should like to ask you, dear."

"You don't know how to ask it."

"Help me, then."

Her fingers moved the latch for all reply.

"My words are nearly always an offence.  
I don't know how to speak of anything  
So as to please you. But I might be taught  
I should suppose. I can't say I see how.  
A man must partly give up being a man  
With women-folk. We could have some arrangement  
By which I'd bind myself to keep hands off  
Anything special you're a mind to name.  
Though I don't like such things 'twixt those that love.  
Two that don't love can't live together without them.  
But two that do can't live together with them."  
She moved the latch a little. "Don't, don't go.  
Don't carry it to someone else this time.  
Tell me about it if it's something human.  
Let me into your grief. I'm not so much  
Unlike other folks as your standing there  
Apart would make me out. Give me my chance,  
I do think, though, you overdo it a little.

What was it brought you up to think it the thing  
To take your mother-loss of a first child  
So inconsolably—in the face of love.  
You'd think his memory might be satisfied—"

"There you go sneering now!"

"I'm not, I'm not!

You make me angry. I'll come down to you.  
God, what a woman! And it's come to this,  
A man can't speak of his own child that's dead."

"You can't because you don't know how.  
If you had any feelings, you that dug  
With your own hand—how could you?—his little grave;  
I saw you from that very window there,  
Making the gravel leap and leap in air,  
Leap up, like that, like that, and land so lightly  
And roll back down the mound beside the hole.  
I thought, who is that man? I don't know you.  
And I crept down the stairs and up the stairs  
To look again, and still your spade kept lifting.  
Then you came in. I heard your rumbling voice  
Out in the kitchen, and I don't know why,  
But I went near to see with my own eyes.  
You could sit there with the stains on your shoes  
Of the fresh earth from your own baby's grave  
And talk about your everyday concerns.  
You had stood the spade up against the wall  
Outside there in the entry, for I saw it."

"I shall laugh the worst laugh I ever laughed.  
I'm cursed. God, if I don't believe I'm cursed."  
"I can repeat the very words you were saying.  
'Three foggy mornings and one rainy day  
Will rot the best birch fence a man can build.'  
Think of it, talk like that at such a time!  
What had how long it takes a birch to rot  
To do with that was in the darkened parlour.



You *couldn't* care! The nearest friends can go  
 With anyone to death, comes so far short  
 They might as well not try to go at all.  
 No, from the time when one is sick to death,  
 One is alone, and he dies more alone.  
 Friends make pretence of following to the grave,  
 But before one is in it, their minds are turned  
 And making the best of their way back to life  
 And living people, and things they understand.  
 But the world's evil. I won't have my grief so  
 If I can change it. Oh, I won't, I won't!"

"There, you have said it all and you feel better.  
 You won't go now. You're crying. Close the door.  
 The heart's gone out of it: why keep it up.  
 Amy! There's someone coming down the road!"  
 "You—oh, you think the talk is all. I must go—  
 Somewhere out of this house. How can I make you—"  
 "If—you—do!" She was opening the door wider.  
 "Where do you mean to go? First tell me that.  
 I'll follow and bring you back by force. I *will*!"

### *The Wood-Pile*

OUT walking in the frozen swamp one grey day  
 I paused and said, "I will turn back from here.  
 No, I will go on farther—and we shall see."  
 The hard snow held me, save where now and then  
 One foot went down. The view was all in lines  
 Straight up and down of tall slim trees  
 Too much alike to mark or name a place by  
 So as to say for certain I was here  
 Or somewhere else: I was just far from home.  
 A small bird flew before me. He was careful  
 To put a tree between us when he lighted,  
 And say no word to tell me who he was  
 Who was so foolish as to think what *he* thought.  
 He thought that I was after him for a feather—

The white one in his tail; like one who takes  
Everything said as personal to himself:  
One flight out sideways would have undeceived him.  
And then there was a pile of wood for which  
I forgot him and let his little fear  
Carry him off the way I might have gone,  
Without so much as wishing him good-night.  
He went behind it to make his last stand.  
It was a cord of maple, cut and split  
And piled—and measured, four by four by eight.  
And not another like it could I see.  
No runner tracks in this Year's snow looped near it.  
And it was older sure than this year's cutting,  
Or even last year's or the year's before.  
The wood was grey and the bark warping off it  
And the pile somewhat sunken. Clematis  
Had wound strings round and round it like a bundle.  
What held it though on one side was a tree  
Still growing, and on one a stake and prop,  
These latter about to fall. I thought that only  
Someone who lived in turning to fresh tasks  
Could so forget his handiwork on which  
He spent himself, the labour of his axe,  
And leave it there far from a useful fireplace  
To warm the frozen swamp as best it could  
With the slow smokeless burning of decay.

### *The Fear*

A LANTERN light from deeper in the barn  
Shone on a man and woman in the door  
And threw their lurching shadows on a house  
Near by, all dark in every glossy window.  
A horse's hoof pawed once the hollow floor,  
And the back of the gig they stood beside  
Moved in a little. The man grasped a wheel,  
The woman spoke out sharply, "Whoa, stand still!  
I saw it just as plain as a white plate,"

She said, "as the light on the dashboard ran  
Along the bushes at the roadside—a man's face.  
You *must* have seen it too."

"I didn't see it.  
Are you sure——"

"Yes, I'm sure!"

"——it was a face?"

"Joel, I'll have to look. I can't go in,  
I can't, and leave a thing like that unsettled.  
Doors locked and curtains drawn will make no difference.  
I always have felt strange when we came home  
To the dark house after so long an absence,  
And the key rattled loudly into place  
Seemed to warn someone to be getting out  
At one door as we entered at another.  
What if I'm right, and someone all the time—  
Don't hold my arm!"

"I say it's someone passing."

"You speak as if this were a travelled road.  
You forget where we are. What is beyond  
That he'd be going to or coming from  
At such an hour of night, and on foot too.  
What was he standing still for in the bushes?"

"It's not so very late—it's only dark.  
There's more in it than you're inclined to say.  
Did he look like——?"

"He looked like anyone.  
I'll never rest to-night unless I know.  
Give me the lantern."

"You don't want the lantern."

She pushed past him and got it for herself.  
"You're not to come," she said. "This is my business.  
If the time's come to face it, I'm the one  
To put it the right way. He'd never dare—  
Listen! He kicked a stone. Hear that, hear that!  
He's coming towards us. Joel, go in—please.  
Hark!—I don't hear him now. But please go in."

"In the first place you can't make me believe it's—"

"It is—or someone else he's sent to watch.  
And now's the time to have it out with him  
While we know definitely where he is.  
Let him get off and he'll be everywhere  
Around us, looking out of trees and bushes  
Till I shan't dare to set a foot outdoors.  
And I can't stand it. Joel, let me go!"

"But it's nonsense to think he'd care enough."

"You mean you couldn't understand his caring.  
Oh, but you see he hadn't had enough—  
Joel, I won't—I won't—I promise you.  
We mustn't say hard things. You mustn't either."  
"I'll be the one, if anybody goes!  
But you give him the advantage with this light  
What couldn't he do to us standing here!  
And if to see was what he wanted, why  
He has seen all there was to see and gone."

He appeared to forget to keep his hold,  
But advanced with her as she crossed the grass  
"What do you want?" she cried to all the dark.  
She stretched up tall to overlook the light  
That hung in both hands hot against her skirt.

"There's no one; so you're wrong," he said.

"There is—"

What do you want?" she cried, and then herself  
Was startled when an answer really came.

"Nothing." It came from well along the road.  
She reached a hand to Joel for support:  
The smell of scorching woollen made her faint.  
"What are you doing round this house at night?"

"Nothing." A pause: there seemed no more to say.  
And then the voice again: "You seem afraid.  
I saw by the way you whipped up the horse.  
I'll just come forward in the lantern light  
And let you see."

"Yes, do—Joel, go back!"  
She stood her ground against the noisy steps  
That came on, but her body rocked a little.

"You see," the voice said.

"Oh." She looked and looked.  
"You don't see—I've a child here by the hand."

"What's a child doing at this time of night—?"

"Out walking. Every child should have the memory  
Of at least one long-after-bedtime walk.  
What, son?"

"Then I should think you'd try to find  
Somewhere to walk——"

"The highway as it happens—  
We're stopping for the fortnight down at Dean's."  
"But if that's all—Joel—you realize—  
You won't think anything. You understand?  
You understand that we have to be careful.  
This is a very, very lonely place.  
Joel!" She spoke as if she couldn't turn.  
The swinging lantern lengthened to the ground,  
It touched, it struck, it clattered and went out.

*Birches*

WHEN I see birches bend to left and right  
Across the lines of straighter darker trees,  
I like to think some boy's been swinging them.  
But swinging doesn't bend them down to stay.  
Ice-storms do that. Often you must have seen them  
Loaded with ice a sunny winter morning  
After a rain. They click upon themselves  
As the breeze rises, and turn many-coloured  
As the stir cracks and crazes their enamel.  
Soon the sun's warmth makes them shed crystal shells  
Shattering and avalanching on the snowcrust—  
Such heaps of broken glass to sweep away  
You'd think the inner dome of heaven had fallen.  
They are dragged to the withered bracken by the load,  
And they seem not to break; though once they are bowed  
So low for long, they never right themselves:  
You may see their trunks arching in the woods  
Years afterwards, trailing their leaves on the ground  
Like girls on hands and knees that throw their hair  
Before them over their heads to dry in the sun.  
But I was going to say when Truth broke in  
With all her matter-of-fact about the ice-storm  
(Now am I free to be poetical?)  
I should prefer to have some boy bend them  
As he went out and in to fetch the cows—  
Some boy too far from town to learn baseball,  
Whose only play was what he found himself,  
Summer or winter, and could play alone.  
One by one he subdued his father's trees  
By riding them down over and over again  
Until he took the stiffness out of them,  
And not one but hung limp, not one was left  
For him to conquer. He learned all there was  
To learn about not launching out too soon  
And so not carrying the tree away  
Clear to the ground. He always kept his poise

To the top branches, climbing carefully  
With the same pains you use to fill a cup  
Up to the brim, and even above the brim.  
Then he flung outward, feet first, with a swish,  
Kicking his way down through the air to the ground.  
So was I once myself a swinger of birches.  
And so I dream of going back to be.  
It's when I'm weary of considerations,  
And life is too much like a pathless wood  
Where your face burns and tickles with the cobwebs  
Broken across it, and one eye is weeping  
From a twig's having lashed it open,  
I'd like to get away from earth a while  
And then come back to it and begin over.  
May no fate wilfully misunderstand me  
And half grant what I wish and snatch me away  
Not to return. Earth's the right place for love:  
I don't know where it's likely to go better.  
I'd like to go by climbing a high birch tree,  
And climb black branches up a snow-white trunk  
*Toward* heaven, till the tree could bear no more,  
But dipped its top and set me down again.  
That would be good both going and coming back.  
One could do worse than be a swinger of birches.

### *The Sound of the Trees*

I WONDER about the trees.  
Why do we wish to bear  
Forever the noise of these  
More than another noise  
So close to our dwelling place?  
We suffer them by the day  
Till we lose all measure of pace,  
And fixity in our joys,  
And acquire a listening air.  
They are that that talks of going  
But never gets away;

And that talks no less for knowing,  
As it grows wiser and older,  
That now it means to stay.  
My feet tug at the floor  
And my head sways to my shoulder  
Sometimes when I watch trees sway,  
From the window or the door.  
I shall set forth for somewhere,  
I shall make the reckless choice  
Some day when they are in voice  
And tossing so as to scare  
The white clouds over them on.  
I shall have less to say,  
But I shall be gone.

### *Hyla Brook*

BY June our brook's run out of song and speed.  
Sought for much after that, it will be found  
Either to have gone groping underground  
(And taken with it all the Hyla breed  
That shouted in the mist a month ago,  
Like ghost of sleigh-bells in a ghost of snow)—  
Or flourished and come up in jewel-weed,  
Weak foliage that is blown upon and bent  
Even against the way its waters went.  
Its bed is left a faded paper sheet  
Of dead leaves stuck together by the heat—  
A brook to none but who remember long.  
This as it will be seen is other far  
Than with brooks taken elsewhere in song.  
We love the things we love for what they are.

### *The Oven Bird*

THERE is a singer everyone has heard,  
Loud, a mid-summer and a mid-wood bird,



Who makes the solid tree trunks sound again.  
He says that leaves are old and that for flowers  
Mid-summer is to spring as one to ten.  
He says the early petal-fall is past  
When pear and cherry bloom went down in showers  
On sunny days a moment overcast;  
And comes that other fall we name the fall.  
He says the highway dust is over all.  
The bird would cease and be as other birds  
But that he knows in singing not to sing.  
The question that he frames in all but words  
Is what to make of a diminished thing.

### *My November Guest*

MY Sorrow, when she's here with me,  
Thinks these dark days of autumn rain  
Are beautiful as days can be;  
She loves the bare, the withered tree;  
She walks the sodden pasture lane.

Her pleasure will not let me stay.  
She talks and I am fain to list:  
She's glad the birds are gone away,  
She's glad her simple worsted grey  
Is silver now with clinging mist.

The desolate, deserted trees,  
The faded earth, the heavy sky,  
The beauties she so truly sees,  
She thinks I have no eye for these,  
And vexes me for reason why.

Not yesterday I learned to know  
The love of bare November days  
Before the coming of the snow,  
But it were vain to tell her so,  
And they are better for her praise.

*Mowing*

THERE was never a sound beside the wood but one,  
And that was my long scythe whispering to the ground.  
What was it it whispered? I knew not well myself;  
Perhaps it was something about the heat of the sun,  
Something, perhaps, about the lack of sound—  
And that was why it whispered and did not speak.  
It was no dream of the gift of idle hours,  
Or easy gold at the hand of fay or elf:  
Anything more than the truth would have seemed too weak  
To the earnest love that laid the swale in rows,  
Not without feeble-pointed spikes of flowers  
(Pale orchises), and scared a bright green snake.  
The fact is the sweetest dream that labor knows.  
My long scythe whispered and left the hay to make.

*To Earthward*

LOVE at the lips was touch  
As sweet as I could bear;  
And once that seemed too much;  
I lived on air  
  
That crossed me from sweet things,  
The flow of—was it musk  
From hidden grapevine springs  
Down hill at dusk?  
  
I had the swirl and ache  
From sprays of honeysuckle  
That when they're gathered shake  
Dew on the knuckle.  
  
I craved strong sweets, but those  
Seemed strong when I was young;  
The petal of the rose  
It was that stung.

## AMERICAN POETRY

Now no joy but lacks salt  
That is not dashed with pain  
And weariness and fault;  
I crave the stain

Of tears, the aftermark  
Of almost too much love,  
The sweet of bitter bark  
And burning clove.

When stiff and sore and scarred  
I take away my hand  
From leaning on it hard  
In grass and sand,

The hurt is not enough:  
I long for weight and strength  
To feel the earth as rough  
To all my length.

*Fire and Ice*

SOME say the world will end in fire,  
Some say in ice.  
From what I've tasted of desire  
I hold with those who favor fire.  
But if it had to perish twice,  
I think I know enough of hate  
To say that for destruction ice  
Is also great  
And would suffice.

*Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening*

WHOSE woods these are I think I know.  
His house is in the village though;

He will not see me stopping here  
To watch his woods fill up with snow.

My little horse must think it queer  
To stop without a farmhouse near  
Between the woods and frozen lake  
The darkest evening of the year.

He gives his harness bells a shake  
To ask if there is some mistake.  
The only other sound's the sweep  
Of easy wind and downy flake.

The woods are lovely, dark and deep.  
But I have promises to keep,  
And miles to go before I sleep,  
And miles to go before I sleep.

### *Bereft*

WHERE had I heard this wind before  
Change like this to a deeper roar?  
What would it take my standing there for,  
Holding open a restive door,  
Looking down hill to a frothy shore?  
Summer was past and day was past.  
Sombre clouds in the west were massed.  
Out in the porch's sagging floor,  
Leaves got up in a coil and hissed,  
Blindly struck at my knee and missed.  
Something sinister in the tone  
Told me my secret must be known:  
Word I was in the house alone  
Somehow must have gotten abroad,  
Word I was in my life alone,  
Word I had no one left but God.

*Desert Places*

SNOW falling and night falling fast oh fast  
In a field I looked into going past,  
And the ground almost covered smooth in snow,  
But a few weeds and stubble showing last.

The woods around it have it—it is theirs.  
All animals are smothered in their lairs.  
I am too absent-spirited to count;  
The loneliness includes me unawares.

And lonely as it is that loneliness  
Will be more lonely ere it will be less—  
A blanker whiteness of benighted snow  
With no expression, nothing to express.

They cannot scare me with their empty spaces  
Between stars—on stars where no human race is.  
I have it in me so much nearer home  
To scare myself with my own desert places.

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CARL SANDBURG

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*Cool Tombs*

WHEN Abraham Lincoln was shoveled into the tombs, he  
forgot the copperheads and the assassin . . . in the  
dust, in the cool tombs.

And Ulysses Grant lost all thought of con men and Wall Street,  
cash and collateral turned ashes . . . in the dust, in the cool  
tombs.

Pocahontas' body, lovely as a poplar, sweet as a red haw in November or a pawpaw in May, did she wonder? does she remember? . . . in the dust, in the cool tombs?

Take any streetful of people buying clothes and groceries, cheering a hero or throwing confetti and blowing tin horns . . . tell me if the lovers are losers . . . tell me if any get more than the lovers . . . in the dust . . . in the cool tombs.

### *Jazz Fantasia*

**D**RUM on your drums, batter on your banjos, sob on the long cool winding saxophones. Go to it, O jazzmen.

Sling your knuckles on the bottoms of the happy timpani, let your trombones ooze, and go husha-husha-hush with the slippery sandpaper.

Moan like an autumn wind high in the lonesome treetops, moan soft like you wanted somebody terrible, cry like a racing car slipping away from a motorcycle-cop, bang-bang! you jazzmen, bang altogether drums, traps, banjos, horns, tin cans—make two people fight on the top of a stairway and scratch each other's eyes in a clinch tumbling down the stairs.

Can the rough stuff . . . Now a Mississippi steamboat pushes up the night river with a hoo-hoo-hoo-oo . . . and the green lanterns calling to the high soft stars . . . a red moon rides on the humps of the low river hills . . . Go to it, O jazzmen.

### *Wind Song*

**L**ONG ago I learned how to sleep,  
In an old apple orchard where the wind swept by counting  
its money and throwing it away,  
In a wind-gaunt orchard where the limbs forked out and listened or never listened at all,

In a passel of trees where the branches trapped the wind into  
 whistling, "Who, who are you?"  
 I slept with my head in an elbow on a summer afternoon and  
 there I took a sleep lesson.  
 There I went away saying: I know why they sleep, I know how  
 they trap the tricky winds.  
 Long ago I learned how to listen to the singing wind and how to  
 forget and how to hear the deep whine,  
 Slapping and lapsing under the day blue and the night stars:  
 Who, who are you?

Who can ever forget  
 listening to the wind go by  
 counting its money  
 and throwing it away?

### *Gone*

EVERYBODY loved Chick Lorimer in our town  
 Far off.  
 Everybody loved her.  
 So we all love a wild girl keeping a hold  
 On a dream she wants.  
 Nobody knows now where Chick Lorimer went.  
 Nobody knows why she packed her trunk . . . a few old things  
 And is gone,  
     Gone with her little chin  
     Thrust ahead of her  
     And her soft hair blowing careless  
     From under a wide hat,  
 Dancer, singer, a laughing passionate lover.  
  
 Were there ten men or a hundred hunting Chick?  
 Were there five men or fifty with aching hearts?  
     Everybody loved Chick Lorimer.  
     Nobody knows where she's gone.

## VACHEL LINDSAY

*The Eagle That Is Forgotten*

*(John P. Altgeld. Born December 30, 1847; died March 12, 1902)*

SLEEP softly . . . eagle forgotten . . . under the stone.  
Time has its way with you there, and the clay has its own.  
"We have buried him now," thought your foes, and in secret rejoiced.

They made a brave show of their mourning, their hatred unvoiced,

They had snarled at you, barked at you, foamed at you, day after day,

Now you were ended. They praised you, . . . and laid you away.

The others that mourned you in silence and terror and truth,  
The widow bereft of her pittance, the boy without youth,  
The mocked and the scorned and the wounded, the lame and the poor

That should have remembered forever, . . . remember no more.

Where are those lovers of yours, on what name do they call

The lost, that in armies wept over your funeral pall?

They call on the names of a hundred high-valiant ones,

A hundred white eagles have risen, the sons of your sons,

The zeal in their wings is a zeal that your dreaming began

The valor that wore out your soul in the service of man.

Sleep softly, . . . eagle forgotten, . . . under the stone,

Time has its way with you there, and the clay has its own.

Sleep on, O brave-hearted, O wise man, that kindled the flame—

To live in mankind is far more than to live in a name,

To live in mankind, far, far more . . . than to live in a name.



*Poems about the Moon**I. Euclid*

OLD Euclid drew a circle  
On a sand-beach long ago.  
He bounded and enclosed it  
With angles thus and so.  
His set of solemn greybeards  
Nodded and argued much  
Of arc and of circumference,  
Diameter and such.  
A silent child stood by them  
From morning until noon  
Because they drew such charming  
Round pictures of the moon.

*II. Yet Gentle Will the Griffin Be*

*(What Grandpa Told the Children)*

THE moon? It is a griffin's egg,  
Hatching to-morrow night.  
And how the little boys will watch  
With shouting and delight  
To see him break the shell and stretch  
And creep across the sky.  
The boys will laugh. The little girls,  
I fear, may hide and cry.  
Yet gentle will the griffin be,  
Most decorous and fat,  
And walk up to the milky way  
And lap it like a cat.

*III. A Sense of Humour*

N O man should stand before the moon  
To make sweet song thereon,  
With dandified importance,  
His sense of humour gone.

Nay, let us don the motley cap,  
The jester's chastened mien,  
If we would woo that looking-glass  
And see what should be seen.

O mirror on fair Heaven's wall,  
We find there what we bring.  
So, let us smile in honest part  
And deck our souls and sing.

Yea, by the chastened jest alone  
Will ghosts and terrors pass,  
And fays, or suchlike friendly things,  
Throw kisses through the glass.

*IV. What Semiramis Said*

T HE moon's a steaming chalice  
Of honey and venom-wine.  
A little of it sipped by night  
Makes the long hours divine.  
But oh, my reckless lovers,  
They drain the cup and wail,  
Die at my feet with shaking limbs  
And tender lips all pale.  
Above them in the sky it bends  
Empty and grey and dread.  
To-morrow night 'tis full again,  
Golden, and foaming red.

V. *The Scissors-Grinder**(What the Tramp Said)*

THE old man had his box and wheel  
For grinding knives and shears.  
No doubt his bell in village streets  
Was joy to children's ears.  
And I bethought me of my youth  
When such men came around,  
And times I asked them in, quite sure  
The scissors should be ground.  
The old man turned and spoke to me,  
His face at last in view.  
And then I thought those curious eyes  
Were eyes that once I knew.

"The moon is but an emery-wheel  
To whet the sword of God,"  
He said. "And here beside my fire  
I stretch upon the sod  
Each night, and dream, and watch the stars  
And watch the ghost-clouds go.  
And see that sword of God in Heaven  
A-waving to and fro.  
I see that sword each century, friend,  
It means the world-war comes  
With all its bloody, wicked chiefs  
And hate-inflaming drums.  
Men talk of peace, but I have seen  
That emery-wheel turn round.  
The voice of Abel cries again  
To God from out the ground.  
The ditches must flow red, the plague  
Go stark and screaming by  
Each time that sword of God takes edge  
Within the midnight sky.  
And those that scorned their brothers here  
And sowed a wind of shame

Will reap the whirlwind as of old  
And face relentless flame."

And thus the scissors-grinder spoke,  
His face at last in view.  
*And there beside the railroad bridge  
I saw the Wandering Jew.*

## VI. *Aladdin and the Jinn*

"BRING me soft song," said Aladdin.  
"This tailor-shop sings not at all.  
Chant me a word of the twilight,  
Of roses that mourn in the fall.  
Bring me a song like hashish  
That will comfort the stale and the sad,  
For I would be mending my spirit,  
Forgetting these days that are bad,  
Forgetting companions too shallow,  
Their quarrels and arguments thin,  
Forgetting the shouting Muezzin!"—  
"I AM YOUR SLAVE," said the Jinn.

"Bring me old wines," said Aladdin.  
"I have been a starved pauper too long.  
Serve them in vessels of jade and of shell,  
Serve them with fruit and with song:—  
Wines of pre-Adamite Sultans  
Digged from beneath the black seas:—  
New-gathered dew from the heavens  
Dripped down from Heaven's sweet trees,  
Cups from the angels' pale tables  
That will make me both handsome and wise,  
For I have beheld her, the princess,  
Firelight and starlight her eyes.  
Pauper I am, I would woo her.  
And—let me drink wine, to begin,  
Though the Koran expressly forbids it."  
"I AM YOUR SLAVE," said the Jinn.

"Plan me a dome," said Aladdin,  
 "That is drawn like the dawn of the moon,  
 When the sphere seems to rest on the mountains,  
 Half-hidden, yet full-risen soon.  
 Build me a dome," said Aladdin,  
 "That shall cause all young lovers to sigh,  
 The fullness of life and of beauty,  
 Peace beyond peace to the eye—  
 A palace of foam and of opal,  
 Pure moonlight without and within,  
 Where I may enthrone my sweet lady."  
 "I AM YOUR SLAVE," said the Jinn.

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 WALLACE STEVENS
 

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*Peter Quince at the Clavier*

## I

JUST as my fingers on these keys  
 Make music, so the selfsame sounds  
 On my spirit make a music, too.

Music is feeling, then, not sound;  
 And thus it is that what I feel,  
 Here in this room, desiring you,

Thinking of your blue-shadowed silk,  
 Is music. It is like the strain  
 Waked in the elders by Susanna.

Of a green evening, clear and warm,  
 She bathed in her still garden, while  
 The red-eyed elders watching, felt

The basses of their beings throb  
In witching chords, and their thin blood  
Pulse pizzicati of Hosanna.

## II

In the green water, clear and warm,  
Susanna lay.  
She searched  
The touch of springs,  
And found  
Concealed imaginings.  
She sighed,  
For so much melody.

Upon the bank, she stood  
In the cool  
Of spent emotions.  
She felt, among the leaves,  
The dew  
Of old devotions.

She walked upon the grass,  
Still quavering.  
The winds were like her maids,  
On timid feet,  
Fetching her woven scarves,  
Yet wavering.

A breath upon her hand  
Muted the night.  
She turned—  
A cymbal crashed,  
And roaring horns.

## III

Soon, with a noise like tambourines,  
Came her attendant Byzantines.

They wondered why Susanna cried  
Against the elders by her side;

And as they whispered, the refrain  
Was like a willow swept by rain.

Anon, their lamps' uplifted flame  
Revealed Susanna and her shame.

And then, the simpering Byzantines  
Fled, with a noise like tambourines.

## IV

Beauty is momentary in the mind—  
The fitful tracing of a portal;  
But in the flesh it is immortal.

The body dies; the body's beauty lives.  
So evenings die, in their green going,  
A wave, interminably flowing.  
So gardens die, their meek breath scenting  
The cowl of winter, done repenting.  
So maidens die, to the auroral  
Celebration of a maiden's choral.

Susanna's music touched the bawdy strings  
Of those white elders; but, escaping,  
Left only Death's ironic scraping.  
Now, in its immortality, it plays  
On the clear viol of her memory,  
And makes a constant sacrament of praise.

*Sunday Morning*

## I

COMPLACENCIES of the peignoir, and late  
Coffee and oranges in a sunny chair,  
And the green freedom of a cockatoo  
Upon a rug mingle to dissipate  
The holy hush of ancient sacrifice.  
She dreams a little, and she feels the dark  
Encroachment of that old catastrophe,  
As a calm darkens among water-lights.  
The pungent oranges and bright, green wings  
Seem things in some procession of the dead,  
Winding across wide water, without sound.  
The day is like wide water, without sound,  
Stilled for the passing of her dreaming feet  
Over the seas, to silent Palestine,  
Dominion of the blood and sepulchre.

## II

Why should she give her bounty to the dead?  
What is divinity if it can come  
Only in silent shadows and in dreams?  
Shall she not find in comforts of the sun,  
In pungent fruit and bright, green wings, or else  
In any balm or beauty of the earth,  
Things to be cherished like the thought of heaven?  
Divinity must live within herself:  
Passions of rain, or moods in falling snow;  
Grievings in loneliness, or unsubdued  
Elations when the forest blooms; gusty  
Emotions on wet roads on autumn nights;  
All pleasures and all pains, remembering  
The bough of summer and the winter branch.  
These are the measures destined for her soul.



## III

Jove in the clouds had his inhuman birth.  
No mother suckled him, no sweet land gave  
Large-mannered motions to his mythy mind.  
He moved among us, as a muttering king,  
Magnificent, would move among his hinds,  
Until our blood, commingling, virginal,  
With heaven, brought such requital to desire  
The very hinds discerned it, in a star.  
Shall our blood fail? Or shall it come to be  
The blood of paradise? And shall the earth  
Seem all of paradise that we shall know?  
The sky will be much friendlier then than now,  
A part of labor and a part of pain,  
And next in glory to enduring love,  
Not this dividing and indifferent blue.

## IV

She says, "I am content when wakened birds,  
Before they fly, test the reality  
Of misty fields, by their sweet questionings;  
But when the birds are gone, and their warm fields  
Return no more, where, then, is paradise?"  
There is not any haunt of prophecy,  
Nor any old chimera of the grave,  
Neither the golden underground, nor isle  
Melodious, where spirits gat them home,  
Nor visionary south, nor cloudy palm  
Remote on heaven's hill, that has endured  
As April's green endures; or will endure  
Like her remembrance of awakened birds,  
Or her desire for June and evening, tipped  
By the consummation of the swallow's wings.

## V

She says, "But in contentment I still feel  
The need of some imperishable bliss."  
Death is the mother of beauty; hence from her,  
Alone, shall come fulfilment to our dreams  
And our desires. Although she strews the leaves  
Of sure obliteration on our paths,  
The path sick sorrow took, the many paths  
Where triumph rang its brassy phrase, or love  
Whispered a little out of tenderness,  
She makes the willow shiver in the sun  
For maidens who were wont to sit and gaze  
Upon the grass, relinquished to their feet.  
She causes boys to pile new plums and pears  
On disregarded plate. The maidens taste  
And stray impassioned in the littering leaves.

## VI

Is there no change of death in paradise?  
Does ripe fruit never fall? Or do the boughs  
Hang always heavy in that perfect sky,  
Unchanging, yet so like our perishing earth,  
With rivers like our own that seek for seas  
They never find, the same receding shores  
That never touch with inarticulate pang?  
Why set the pear upon those river-banks  
Or spice the shores with odors of the plum?  
Alas, that they should wear our colors there,  
The silken weavings of our afternoons,  
And pick the strings of our insipid lutes!  
Death is the mother of beauty, mystical,  
Within whose burning bosom we devise  
Our earthly mothers waiting, sleeplessly.

## VII

Supple and turbulent, a ring of men  
Shall chant in orgy on a summer morn  
Their boisterous devotion to the sun,  
Not as a god, but as a god might be,  
Naked among them, like a savage source.  
Their chant shall be a chant of paradise,  
Out of their blood, returning to the sky;  
And in their chant shall enter, voice by voice,  
The windy lake wherein their lord delights,  
The trees, like serafim, and echoing hills,  
That choir among themselves long afterward.  
They shall know well the heavenly fellowship  
Of men that perish and of summer morn.  
And whence they came and whither they shall go  
The dew upon their feet shall manifest.

## VIII

She hears, upon that water without sound,  
A voice that cries, "The tomb in Palestine  
Is not the porch of spirits lingering.  
It is the grave of Jesus, where he lay."  
We live in an old chaos of the sun,  
Or old dependency of day and night,  
Or island solitude, unsponsored, free,  
Of that wide water, inescapable.  
Deer walk upon our mountains, and the quail  
Whistle about us their spontaneous cries;  
Sweet berries ripen in the wilderness;  
And, in the isolation of the sky,  
At evening, casual flocks of pigeons make  
Ambiguous undulations as they sink,  
Downward to darkness, on extended wings.

*Le Monocle de Mon Oncle*

## I

"MOTHER of heaven, regina of the clouds,  
O sceptre of the sun, crown of the moon,  
There is not nothing, no, no, never nothing,  
Like the clashed edges of two words that kill."  
And so I mocked her in magnificent measure.  
Or was it that I mocked myself alone?  
I wish that I might be a thinking stone.  
The sea of spuming thought foists up again  
The radiant bubble that she was. And then  
A deep up-pouring from some saltier well  
Within me, bursts its watery syllable.

## II

A red bird flies across the golden floor.  
It is a red bird that seeks out his choir  
Among the choirs of wind and wet and wing.  
A torrent will fall from him when he finds.  
Shall I uncrumple this much-crumpled thing?  
I am a man of fortune greeting heirs;  
For it has come that thus I greet the spring.  
These choirs of welcome choir for me farewell.  
No spring can follow past meridian.  
Yet you persist with anecdotal bliss  
To make believe a starry *connaissance*.

## III

Is it for nothing, then, that old Chinese  
Sat titivating by their mountain pools  
Or in the Yangtse studied out their beards?  
I shall not play the flat historic scale.  
You know how Utamaro's beauties sought

The end of love in their all-speaking braids.  
You know the mountainous coiffures of Bath.  
Alas! Have all the barbers lived in vain  
That not one curl in nature has survived?  
Why, without pity on these studious ghosts,  
Do you come dripping in your hair from sleep?

## IV

This luscious and impeccable fruit of life  
Falls, it appears, of its own weight to earth.  
When you were Eve, its acrid juice was sweet,  
Untasted, in its heavenly, orchard air.  
An apple serves as well as any skull  
To be the book in which to read a round,  
And is as excellent, in that it is composed  
Of what, like skulls, comes rotting back to ground.  
But it excels in this, that as the fruit  
Of love, it is a book too mad to read  
Before one merely reads to pass the time.

## V

In the high west there burns a furious star.  
It is for fiery boys that star was set  
And for sweet-smelling virgins close to them.  
The measure of the intensity of love  
Is measure, also, of the verve of earth.  
For me, the firefly's quick, electric stroke  
Ticks tediously the time of one more year.  
And you? Remember how the crickets came  
Out of their mother grass, like little kin,  
In the pale nights, when your first imagery  
Found inklings of your bond to all that dust.

## VI

If men at forty will be painting lakes  
The ephemeral blues must merge for them in one,  
The basic slate, the universal hue.  
There is a substance in us that prevails.  
But in our amours amorists discern  
Such fluctuations that their scrivening  
Is breathless to attend each quirky turn.  
When amorists grow bald, then amours shrink  
Into the compass and curriculum  
Of introspective exiles, lecturing.  
It is a theme for Hyacinth alone.

## VII

The mules that angels ride come slowly down  
The blazing passes, from beyond the sun.  
Descensions of their tinkling bells arrive.  
These muleteers are dainty of their way.  
Meantime, centurions guffaw and beat  
Their shrilling tankards on the table-boards.  
This parable, in sense, amounts to this:  
The honey of heaven may or may not come,  
But that of earth both comes and goes at once.  
Suppose these couriers brought amid their train  
A damsel heightened by eternal bloom.

## VIII

Like a dull scholar, I behold, in love,  
An ancient aspect touching a new mind.  
It comes, it blooms, it bears its fruit and dies.  
This trivial trope reveals a way of truth.  
Our bloom is gone. We are the fruit thereof.  
Two golden gourds distended on our vines,  
Into the autumn weather, splashed with frost,

Distorted by hale fatness, turned grotesque.  
We hang like warty squashes, streaked and rayed,  
The laughing sky will see the two of us  
Washed into rinds by rotting winter rains.

## IX

In verses wild with motion, full of din,  
Loudened by cries, by clashes, quick and sure  
As the deadly thought of men accomplishing  
Their curious fates in war, come, celebrate  
The faith of forty, ward of Cupido.  
Most venerable heart, the lustiest conceit  
Is not too lusty for your broadening.  
I quiz all sounds, all thoughts, all everything  
For the music and manner of the paladins  
To make oblation fit. Where shall I find  
Bravura adequate to this great hymn?

## X

The fops of fancy in their poems leave  
Memorabilia of the mystic spouts,  
Spontaneously watering their gritty soils.  
I am a yeoman, as such fellows go.  
I know no magic trees, no balmy boughs,  
No silver-ruddy, gold-vermilion fruits.  
But, after all, I know a tree that bears  
A semblance to the thing I have in mind.  
It stands gigantic, with a certain tip  
To which all birds come sometime in their time.  
But when they go that tip still tips the tree.

## XI

If sex were all, then every trembling hand  
Could make us squeak, like dolls, the wished-for words.

But note the unconscionable treachery of fate,  
That makes us weep, laugh, grunt and groan, and shout  
Doleful heroics, pinching gestures forth  
From madness or delight, without regard  
To that first, foremost law. Anguishing hour!  
Last night, we sat beside a pool of pink,  
Clipped with lilies scudding the bright chromes,  
Keen to the point of starlight, while a frog  
Boomed from his very belly odious chords.

## XII

A blue pigeon it is, that circles the blue sky,  
On sidelong wing, around and round and round.  
A white pigeon it is, that flutters to the ground,  
Grown tired of flight. Like a dark rabbi, I  
Observed, when young, the nature of mankind,  
In lordly study. Every day, I found  
Man proved a gobbet in my mincing world.  
Like a rose rabbi, later, I pursued,  
And still pursue, the origin and course  
Of love, but until now I never knew  
That fluttering things have so distinct a shade.

*Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird*

## I

AMONG twenty snowy mountains,  
The only moving thing  
Was the eye of the blackbird.

## II

I was of three minds,  
Like a tree  
In which there are three blackbirds.



## III

The blackbird whirled in the autumn winds.  
It was a small part of the pantomime.

## IV

A man and a woman  
Are one.  
A man and a woman and a blackbird  
Are one.

## V

I do not know which to prefer,  
The beauty of inflections  
Or the beauty of innuendoes,  
The blackbird whistling  
Or just after.

## VI

Icicles filled the long window  
With barbaric glass.  
The shadow of the blackbird  
Crossed it, to and fro.  
The mood  
Traced in the shadow  
An indecipherable cause.

## VII

O thin men of Haddam,  
Why do you imagine golden birds?  
Do you not see how the blackbird  
Walks around the feet  
Of the women about you?

## VIII

I know noble accents  
And lucid, inescapable rhythms;  
But I know, too,  
That the blackbird is involved  
In what I know.

## IX

When the blackbird flew out of sight,  
It marked the edge  
Of one of many circles.

## X

At the sight of blackbirds  
Flying in a green light,  
Even the bawds of euphony  
Would cry out sharply.

## XI

He rode over Connecticut  
In a glass coach.  
Once, a fear pierced him,  
In that he mistook  
The shadow of his equipage  
For blackbirds.

## XII

The river is moving.  
The blackbird must be flying.

## XIII

It was evening all afternoon.  
It was snowing  
And it was going to snow.  
The blackbird sat  
In the cedar-limbs.

*Domination of Black*

AT night, by the fire,  
The colors of the bushes  
And of the fallen leaves,  
Repeating themselves,  
Turned in the room,  
Like the leaves themselves  
Turning in the wind.  
Yes: but the color of the heavy hemlocks  
Came striding.  
And I remembered the cry of the peacocks.

The colors of their tails  
Were like the leaves themselves  
Turning in the wind,  
In the twilight wind.  
They swept over the room,  
Just as they flew from the boughs of the hemlocks  
Down to the ground.  
I heard them cry—the peacocks.  
Was it a cry against the twilight  
Or against the leaves themselves  
Turning in the wind,  
Turning as the flames  
Turned in the fire,  
Turning as the tails of the peacocks  
Turned in the loud fire,  
Loud as the hemlocks

Full of the cry of the peacocks?  
Or was it a cry against the hemlocks?

Out of the window,  
I saw how the planets gathered  
Like the leaves themselves  
Turning in the wind.  
I saw how the night came,  
Came striding like the color of the heavy hemlocks.  
I felt afraid.  
And I remembered the cry of the peacocks.

### *Sea Surface Full of Clouds*

#### I

IN that November off Tehuantepec,  
The slopping of the sea grew still one night  
And in the morning summer hued the deck

And made one think of rosy chocolate  
And gilt umbrellas. Paradisal green  
Gave suavity to the perplexed machine

Of ocean, which like limpid water lay.  
Who, then, in that ambrosial latitude  
Out of the light evolved the moving blooms,

Who, then, evolved the sea-blooms from the clouds  
Diffusing balm in that Pacific calm?  
*C'était mon enfant, mon bijou, mon âme.*

The sea-clouds whitened far below the calm  
And moved, as blooms move, in the swimming green  
And in its watery radiance, while the hue

Of heaven in an antique reflection rolled  
Round those flotillas. And sometimes the sea  
Poured brilliant iris on the glistening blue.

## II

In that November off Tehuantepec  
The slopping of the sea grew still one night.  
At breakfast jelly yellow streaked the deck

And made one think of chop-house chocolate  
And sham umbrellas. And a sham-like green  
Capped summer-seeming on the tense machine

Of ocean, which in sinister flatness lay.  
Who, then, beheld the rising of the clouds  
That strode submerged in that malevolent sheen,

Who saw the mortal massives of the blooms  
Of water moving on the water-floor?  
*C'était mon frère du ciel, ma vie, mon or.*

The gongs rang loudly as the windy booms  
Hoo-hooded it in the darkened ocean-blooms.  
The gongs grew still. And then blue heaven spread

Its crystalline pendentives on the sea  
And the macabre of the water-glooms  
In an enormous undulation fled.

## III

In that November off Tehuantepec,  
The slopping of the sea grew still one night  
And a pale silver patterned on the deck

And made one think of porcelain chocolate  
And pied umbrellas. An uncertain green,  
Piano-polished, held the tranced machine

Of ocean, as a prelude holds and holds.  
Who, seeing silver petals of white blooms  
Unfolding in the water, feeling sure

Of the milk within the saltiest spurge, heard, then,  
The sea unfolding in the sunken clouds?  
*Oh! C'était mon extase et mon amour.*

So deeply sunken were they that the shrouds,  
The shrouding shadows, made the petals black  
Until the rolling heaven made them blue,

A blue beyond the rainy hyacinth,  
And smiting the crevasses of the leaves  
Deluged the ocean with a sapphire blue.

## IV

In that November off Tehuantepec  
The night-long slopping of the sea grew still.  
A mallow morning dozed upon the deck.

And made one think of musky chocolate  
And frail umbrellas. A too-fluent green  
Suggested malice in the dry machine

Of ocean, pondering dank stratagem.  
Who then beheld the figures of the clouds  
Like blooms secluded in the thick marine?

Like blooms? Like damasks that were shaken off  
From the loosed girdles in the spangling must.  
*C'était ma foi, la nonchalance divine.*

The nakedness would rise and suddenly turn  
Salt masks of beard and mouths of bellowing,  
Would—But more suddenly the heaven rolled

Its bluest sea-clouds in the thinking green,  
And the nakedness became the broadest blooms,  
Mile-mallows that a mallow sun cajoled.

## V

In that November off Tehuantepec  
 Night stilled the slopping of the sea. The day  
 Came, bowing and voluble, upon the deck,

Good clown. . . . One thought of Chinese chocolate  
 And large umbrellas. And a motley green  
 Followed the drift of the obese machine

Of ocean, perfected in indolence.  
 What pistache one, ingenious and droll,  
 Beheld the sovereign clouds as jugglery

And the sea as turquoise-turbaned Sambo, neat  
 At tossing saucers—cloudy-conjuring sea?  
*C'était mon esprit bâtard, l'ignominie.*

The sovereign clouds came clustering. The conch  
 Of loyal conjuration trumped. The wind  
 Of green blooms turning crisped the motley hue

To clearing opalescence. Then the sea  
 And heaven rolled as one and from the two  
 Came fresh transfigurings of freshest blue.

*To the One of Fictive Music*

SISTER and mother and diviner love,  
 And of the sisterhood of the living dead  
 Most near, most clear, and of the clearest bloom,  
 And of the fragrant mothers the most dear  
 And queen, and of diviner love the day  
 And flame and summer and sweet fire, no thread  
 Of cloudy silver sprinkles in your gown  
 Its venom of renown, and on your head  
 No crown is simpler than the simple hair.

Now, of the music summoned by the birth  
That separates us from the wind and sea,  
Yet leaves us in them, until earth becomes,  
By being so much of the things we are,  
Gross effigy and simulacrum, none  
Gives motion to perfection more serene  
Than yours, out of our imperfections wrought,  
Most rare, or ever of more kindred air  
In the laborious weaving that you wear.

For so retentive of themselves are men  
That music is intensest which proclaims  
The near, the clear, and vaunts the clearest bloom,  
And of all vigils musing the obscure,  
That apprehends the most which sees and names,  
As in your name, an image that is sure,  
Among the arrant spices of the sun,  
O bough and bush and scented vine, in whom  
We give ourselves our likest issuance.

Yet not too like, yet not so like to be  
Too near, too clear, saving a little to endow  
Our feigning with the strange unlike, whence springs  
The difference that heavenly pity brings.  
For this, musician, in your girdle fixed  
Bear other perfumes. On your pale head wear  
A band entwining, set with fatal stones.  
Unreal, give back to us what once you gave:  
The imagination that we spurned and crave.

### *Cortège for Rosenbloom*

NOW, the wry Rosenbloom is dead  
And his finical carriers tread,  
On a hundred legs, the tread  
Of the dead.  
Rosenbloom is dead.



They carry the wizened one  
Of the color of horn  
To the sullen hill,  
Treading a tread  
In unison for the dead.

Rosenbloom is dead.  
The tread of the carriers does not halt  
On the hill, but turns  
Up the sky.  
They are bearing his body into the sky.

It is the infants of misanthropes  
And the infants of nothingness  
That tread  
The wooden ascents  
Of the ascending of the dead.

It is turbans they wear  
And boots of fur  
As they tread the boards  
In a region of frost,  
Viewing the frost;

To a chirr of gongs  
And a chitter of cries  
And the heavy thrum  
Of the endless tread  
That they tread;

To a jangle of doom  
And a jumble of words  
Of the intense poem  
Of the strictest prose  
Of Rosenbloom.

And they bury him there,  
Body and soul,

In a place in the sky.  
The lamentable tread!  
Rosenbloom is dead.

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WITTER BYNNER

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*Correspondent*

WORDS, words and words! What else, when men are dead,  
Their small lives ended and their sayings said,  
Is left of them? Their children go to dust,  
As also all their children's children must,  
And their belongings are of paltry worth  
Against the insatiable consuming earth . . .  
I knew a man and almost had forgot  
The wisdom of the letters that he wrote;  
But words, if words are wise, go on and on  
To make a longer note of unison  
With man and man than living persons make  
With one another for whatever sake.  
Therefore I wept tonight when quick words rose  
Out of a dead man's grave, whom no one knows.

*Charioteer*

HERE is a woman whom a man can greet  
Equal to equal, which is something said;  
For seldom will a man forego conceit  
And grant a woman room, till she is dead.  
But here's a woman different: a young mind  
In a body aging with no age at all.  
She's like a living portrait whom you find

Some rainy night in your ancestral hall,  
The spark within her eye aware and human . . .  
Having Athena's mind, Achilles' heel,  
She's mythological, this modern woman.  
Torn from the chariot, a loosened wheel  
Which kept the chariot upon its course,  
She runs ahead, beyond the fallen horse.

### *Ghost*

HE rises from his guests, abruptly leaves,  
Because of memory that long moons ago  
Others now dead had dined with him, and grieves  
Because these newer persons he must know  
Might not have loved his ghosts, his unknown dead.  
There are new smiles, new answers to his quips;  
But there are intervals when, having said  
His dinner-table say, he hears dead lips . . .  
The dead have ways of mingling in the uses  
Of life they leave behind, the dead can rise  
When dinner's done. But one of them refuses  
To go away and gazes with dead eyes  
Piercing him deeper than a rain can reach,  
Leaving him only motion, only speech.

### *At the Last*

THERE is no denying  
That it matters little,  
When through a narrow door  
We enter a room together,  
Which goes after, which before.

Perhaps you are not dying:  
Perhaps—there is no knowing—  
I shall slip by and turn and laugh with you

Because it mattered so little,  
The order of our going.

### *Ganymede*

WHEN love begins with Ganymede, he gathers  
All blossoms that a cloudy rain can bring  
And, heedless of the warning of his fathers,  
Folds in his arms the elements of spring.  
This is a world that vernal things should count in,  
There should be only happiness to know,—  
A breath of wild-flowers carried from the mountain  
And changed, along the waves, to falling snow.  
Shade may be cool and comfortable for lovers;  
But what great shadow darkening in the sky  
Circles and distances, then nears and hovers  
As though a vulturous bird of death were by? . . .  
Ganymede feels the talon in his spine  
Lift him Olympian to lustier wine.

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WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS

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### *The Wanderer*

*A Rococo Study*

ADVENT

EVEN in the time when as yet  
I had no certain knowledge of her  
She sprang from the nest, a young crow,  
Whose first flight circled the forest.

I know now how then she showed me  
Her mind, reaching out to the horizon,  
She close above the tree tops.  
I saw her eyes straining at new distance  
And as the woods fell from her flying  
Likewise they fell from me as I followed—  
So that I strongly guessed all that I must put from me  
To come through ready for the high courses.

But one day, crossing the ferry  
With the great towers of Manhattan before me,  
Out at the prow with the sea wind blowing,  
I had been wearying many questions  
Which she had put on to try me:  
How shall I be a mirror to this modernity?  
When lo! in a rush, dragging  
A blunt boat on the yielding river—  
Suddenly I saw her! And she waved me  
From the white wet in midst of her playing!  
She cried me, "Haia! Here I am, son!  
See how strong my little finger is!  
Can I not swim well?  
I can fly too!" And with that a great sea-gull  
Went to the left, vanishing with a wild cry—  
But in my mind all the persons of the godhead  
Followed after.

#### CLARITY

"Come!" cried my mind and by her might  
That was upon us we flew above the river  
Seeking her, grey gulls among the white—  
In the air speaking as she had willed it:  
"I am given," cried I, "now I know it!  
I know now all my time is forespent!  
For me one face is all the world!  
For I have seen her at last, this day,  
In whom age in age is united—

Indifferent, out of sequence, marvellously!  
Saving alone that one sequence  
Which is the beauty of all the world, for surely  
Either there in the rolling smoke spheres below us  
Or here with us in the air intercircling,  
Certainly somewhere here about us  
I know she is revealing these things!"

And as gulls we flew and with soft cries  
We seemed to speak, flying, "It is she  
The mighty, recreating the whole world,  
This the first day of wonders!  
She is attiring herself before me—  
Taking shape before me for worship,  
A red leaf that falls upon a stone!  
It is she of whom I told you, old  
Forgiveless, unreconcilable;  
That high wanderer of by-ways  
Walking imperious in beggary!  
At her throat is loose gold, a single chain  
From among many, on her bent fingers  
Are rings from which the stones are fallen,  
Her wrists wear a diminished state, her ankles  
Are bare! Toward the river! Is it she there?"  
And we swerved clamorously downward—  
"I will take my peace in her henceforth!"

#### BROADWAY

It was then she struck—from behind,  
In mid air, as with the edge of a great wing!  
And instantly down the mists of my eyes  
There came crowds walking—men as visions  
With expressionless, animate faces;  
Empty men with shell-thin bodies  
Jostling close above the gutter,  
Hasting—nowhere! And then for the first time  
I really saw her, really scented the sweat

Of her presence and—fell back sickened!  
Ominous, old, painted—  
With bright lips, and lewd Jew's eyes  
Her might strapped in by a corset  
To give her age youth, perfect  
In her will to be young she had covered  
The godhead to go beside me.  
Silent, her voice entered at my eyes  
And my astonished thought followed her easily:  
"Well, do their eyes shine, do their clothes fit?  
These *live* I tell you! Old men with red cheeks,  
Young men in gay suits! See them!  
Dogged, quivering, impassive—  
Well—are these the ones you envied?"  
At which I answered her, "Marvellous old queen,  
Grant me power to catch something of this day's  
Air and sun into your service!  
That these toilers after peace and after pleasure  
May turn to you, worshippers at all hours!"  
But she sniffed upon the words warily—  
Yet I persisted, watching for an answer:  
"To you, horrible old woman,  
Who know all fires out of the bodies  
Of all men that walk with lust at heart!  
To you, O mighty, crafty prowler  
After the youth of all cities, drunk  
With the sight of thy archness! All the youth  
That come to you, you having the knowledge  
Rather than to those uninitiate—  
To you, marvellous old queen, give me always  
A new marriage—"

But she laughed loudly—  
"A new grip upon those garments that brushed me  
In days gone by on beach, lawn, and in forest!  
May I be lifted still, up and out of terror,  
Up from before the death living around me—  
Torn up continually and carried  
Whatever way the head of your whim is,  
A burr upon those streaming tatters—"

But the night had fallen, she stilled me  
And led me away.

## PATERSON—THE STRIKE

At the first peep of dawn she roused me!  
I rose trembling at the change which the night saw!  
For there, wretchedly brooding in a corner  
From which her old eyes glittered fiercely—  
“Go!” she said, and I hurried shivering  
Out into the deserted streets of Paterson.

That night she came again hovering  
In rags within the filmy ceiling—  
“Great Queen, bless me with thy tatters!”  
“You are blest, go on!”

“Hot for savagery,  
Sucking the air! I went into the city,  
Out again, baffled onto the mountain!  
Back into the city!

Nowhere  
The subtle! Everywhere the electric!

“A short bread-line before a hitherto empty tea shop:  
No questions—all stood patiently,  
Dominated by one idea: something  
That carried them as they are always wanting to be carried,  
‘But what is it,’ I asked those nearest me,  
‘This thing heretofore unobtainable  
That they seem so clever to have put on now!’

“Why since I have failed them can it be anything but their own  
brood?

Can it be anything but brutality?  
On that at least they’re united! That at least  
Is their bean soup, their calm bread and a few luxuries!

“But in me, more sensitive, marvellous old queen,  
It sank deep into the blood that I rose upon



The tense air enjoying the dusty fight!  
Heavy drink were the low, sloping foreheads  
The flat skulls with the unkempt black or blonde hair,  
The ugly legs of the young girls, pistons  
Too powerful for delicacy!  
The women's wrists, the men's arms, red  
Used to heat and cold, to toss quartered beeves  
And barrels, and milk-cans, and crates of fruit!

"Faces all knotted up like burls on oaks,  
Grasping, fox-snouted, thick-lipped,  
Sagging breasts and protruding stomachs,  
Rasping voices, filthy habits with the hands.  
Nowhere you! Everywhere the electric!

"Ugly, venomous, gigantic!  
Tossing me as a great father his helpless  
Infant till it shriek with ecstasy  
And its eyes roll and its tongue hangs out!—

"I am at peace again, old queen, I listen clearer now."

#### ABROAD

Never, even in a dream,  
Have I winged so high nor so well  
As with her, she leading me by the hand,  
That first day on the Jersey mountains!  
And never shall I forget  
The trembling interest with which I heard  
Her voice in a low thunder:  
"You are safe here. Look, child, look open-mouth!  
The patch of road between the steep bramble banks;  
The tree in the wind, the white house there, the sky!  
Speak to men of these, concerning me!  
For never while you permit them to ignore me  
In these shall the full of my freed voice  
Come grappling the ear with intent!  
Never while the air's clear coolness  
Is seized to be a coat for pettiness;

Never while richness of greenery  
Stands a shield for prurient minds;  
Never, permitting these things unchallenged  
Shall my voice of leaves and vari-coloured bark come free  
through!"

At which, knowing her solitude,  
I shouted over the country below me:  
"Waken! my people to the boughs green  
With ripening fruit within you!  
Waken to the myriad cinquefoil  
In the waving grass of your minds!  
Waken to the silent phoebe nest  
Under the eaves of your spirit!"

But she, stooping nearer the shifting hills  
Spoke again. "Look there! See them!  
There in the oat field with the horses,  
See them there! bowed by their passions  
Crushed down, that had been raised as a roof beam!  
The weight of the sky is upon them  
Under which all roof beams crumble.  
There is none but the single roof beam:  
There is no love bears against the great firefly!"  
At this I looked up at the sun  
Then shouted again with all the might I had.  
But my voice was a seed in the wind.  
Then she, the old one, laughing  
Seized me and whirling about bore back  
To the city, upward, still laughing  
Until the great towers stood above the marshland  
Wheeling beneath: the little creeks, the mallows  
That I picked as a boy, the Hackensack  
So quiet that seemed so broad formerly:  
The crawling trains, the cedar swamp on the one side—  
All so old, so familiar—so new now  
To my marvelling eyes as we passed  
Invisible.

## SOOTHSAY

Eight days went by, eight days  
Comforted by no nights, until finally:  
"Would you behold yourself old, beloved?"  
I was pierced, yet I consented gladly  
For I knew it could not be otherwise.  
And she—"Behold yourself old!  
Sustained in strength, wielding might in gript surges!  
Not bodying the sun in weak leaps  
But holding way over rockish men  
With fern tree fingers on their little crags,  
Their hollows, the new Atlas, to bear them  
For pride and for mockery! Behold  
Yourself old! winding with slow might—  
A vine among oaks—to the thin tops:  
Leaving the leafless leaved,  
Bearing purple clusters! Behold  
Yourself old! birds are behind you.  
You are the wind coming that stills birds,  
Shakes the leaves in booming polyphony—  
Slow, winning high way amid the knocking  
Of boughs, evenly crescendo,  
The din and bellow of the male wind!  
Leap then from forest into foam!  
Lash about from low into high flames  
Tipping sound, the female chorus—  
Linking all lions, all twitterings  
To make them nothing! Behold yourself old!"  
As I made to answer she continued,  
A little wistfully yet in a voice clear cut:  
"Good is my overlip and evil  
My underlip to you henceforth:  
For I have taken your soul between my two hands  
And this shall be as it is spoken."

## ST. JAMES' GROVE

And so it came to that last day  
When, she leading by the hand, we went out

Early in the morning, I heavy of heart  
For I knew the novitiate was ended  
The ecstasy was over, the life begun.

In my woollen shirt and the pale blue necktie  
My grandmother gave me, there I went  
With the old queen right past the houses  
Of my friends down the hill to the river  
As on any usual day, any errand.  
Alone, walking under trees,  
I went with her, she with me in her wild hair,  
By Santiago Grove and presently  
She bent forward and knelt by the river,  
The Passaic, that filthy river.  
And there dabbling her mad hands,  
She called me close beside her.  
Raising the water then in the cupped palm  
She bathed our brows wailing and laughing:  
"River, we are old, you and I,  
We are old and by bad luck, beggars.  
Lo, the filth in our hair, our bodies stink!  
Old friend, here I have brought you  
The young soul you long asked of me.  
Stand forth, river, and give me  
The old friend of my revels!  
Give me the well-worn spirit  
For here I have made a room for it,  
And I will return to you forthwith  
The youth you have long asked of me:  
Stand forth, river, and give me  
The old friend of my revels!"

And the filthy Passaic consented!

Then she, leaping up with a fierce cry:  
"Enter, youth, into this bulk!  
Enter, river, into this young man!"  
Then the river began to enter my heart,  
Eddying back cool and limpid

Into the crystal beginning of its days.  
But with the rebound it leaped forward:  
Muddy, then black and shrunken  
Till I felt the utter depth of its rottenness  
The vile breadth of its degradation  
And dropped down knowing this was me now.  
But she lifted me and the water took a new tide  
Again into the older experiences,  
And so, backward and forward,  
It tortured itself within me  
Until time had been washed finally under,  
And the river had found its level  
And its last motion had ceased  
And I knew all—it became me.  
And I knew this for double certain  
For there, whitely, I saw myself  
Being borne off under the water!  
I could have shouted out in my agony  
At the sight of myself departing  
Forever—but I bit back my despair  
For she had averted her eyes  
By which I knew well what she was thinking—  
And so the last of me was taken.

Then she, "Be mostly silent!"  
And turning to the river, spoke again:  
"For him and for me, river, the wandering,  
But by you I leave for happiness  
Deep foliage, the thickest beeches—  
Though elsewhere they are all dying—  
Tallest oaks and yellow birches  
That dip their leaves in you, mourning,  
As now I dip my hair, immemorial  
Of me, immemorial of him,  
Immemorial of these our promises!  
Here shall be a bird's paradise,  
They sing to you remembering my voice:  
Here the most secluded spaces  
For miles around, hallowed by a stench

To be our joint solitude and temple;  
In memory of this clear marriage  
And the child I have brought you in the late years,  
Live, river, live in luxuriance  
Remembering this our son,  
In remembrance of me and my sorrow  
And of the new wandering!"

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ELINOR WYLIE

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*This Corruptible*

THE Body, long oppressed  
And pierced, then prayed for rest  
(Being but apprenticed to the other Powers);  
And kneeling in that place  
Implored the thrust of grace  
Which makes the dust lie level with the flowers.

Then did that fellowship  
Of three, the Body strip;  
Beheld his wounds, and none among them mortal;  
The Mind severe and cool;  
The Heart still half a fool;  
The fine-spun Soul, a beam of sun can startle.

These three, a thousand years  
Had made adventurers  
Amid all villainies the earth can offer,  
Applied them to resolve  
From the universal gulph  
What pangs the poor material flesh may suffer.

"This is a pretty pass;  
To hear the growing grass  
Complain; the clay cry out to be translated;  
Will not this grosser stuff  
Receive reward enough  
If stabled after labouring, and baited?"

Thus spoke the Mind in scorn:  
The Heart, which had outworn  
The Body, and was weary of its fashion,  
Preferring to be dressed  
In skin of bird or beast,  
Replied more softly, in feigned compassion.

"Anatomy most strange  
Crying to chop and change;  
Inferior copy of a higher image;  
While I, the noble guest,  
Sick of your second-best  
Sigh for embroidered archangelic plumage:

"For shame, thou fustian cloak!"  
And then the Spirit spoke;  
Within the void it swung securely tethered  
By strings composed of cloud;  
It spoke both low and loud  
Above a storm no lesser star had weathered.

"O lodging for the night!  
O house of my delight!  
O lovely hovel builded for my pleasure!  
Dear tenement of clay  
Endure another day  
As coffin sweetly fitted to my measure.

"Take Heart, and call to Mind  
Although we are unkind;  
Although we steal your shelter, strength, and clothing;  
'Tis you who shall escape

In some enchanting shape  
Or be dissolved to elemental nothing.

"You, the unlucky slave,  
Are the lily on the grave;  
The wave that runs above the bones a-whitening;  
You are the new-mown grass;  
And the wheaten bread of the Mass;  
And the fabric of the rain, and the lightning.

"If one of us elect  
To leave the poor suspect  
Imperfect bosom of the earth our parent;  
And from the world avert  
The Spirit or the Heart  
Upon a further and essential errand;

"His chain he cannot slough  
Nor cast his substance off;  
He bears himself upon his flying shoulder;  
The Heart, infirm and dull;  
The Mind, in any skull;  
Are captive still, and wearier and colder.

" 'Tis you who are the ghost,  
Disintegrated, lost;  
The burden shed; the dead who need not bear it;  
O grain of God in power,  
Endure another hour!  
It is but for an hour," said the Spirit.

### *The Eagle and the Mole*

A VOID the reeking herd,  
Shun the polluted flock,  
Live like that stoic bird,  
The eagle of the rock.



## AMERICAN POETRY

The huddled warmth of crowds  
Begets and fosters hate;  
He keeps, above the clouds,  
His cliff inviolate.

When flocks are folded warm,  
And herds to shelter run,  
He sails above the storm,  
He stares into the sun.

If in the eagle's track  
Your sinews cannot leap,  
Avoid the lathered pack,  
Turn from the steaming sheep.

If you would keep your soul  
From spotted sight or sound,  
Live like the velvet mole;  
Go burrow under ground.

And there hold intercourse  
With roots of trees and stones,  
With rivers at their source,  
And disembodied bones.

*O Virtuous Light*

A PRIVATE madness has prevailed  
Over the pure and valiant mind;  
The instrument of reason failed  
And the star-gazing eyes struck blind.

Sudden excess of light has wrought  
Confusion in the secret place  
Where the slow miracles of thought  
Take shape through patience into grace.

Mysterious as steel and flint  
The birth of this destructive spark  
Whose inward growth has power to print  
Strange suns upon the natural dark.

O break the walls of sense in half  
And make the spirit fugitive!  
This light begotten of itself  
Is not a light by which to live!

The fire of farthing tallow dips  
Dispels the menace of the skies  
So it illuminate the lips  
And enter the discerning eyes.

O virtuous light, if thou be man's  
Or matter of the meteor stone,  
Prevail against this radiance  
Which is engendered of its own!

### *Escape*

WHEN foxes eat the last gold grape,  
And the last white antelope is killed,  
I shall stop fighting and escape  
Into a little house I'll build.

But first I'll shrink to fairy size,  
With a whisper no one understands,  
Making blind moons of all your eyes,  
And muddy roads of all your hands.

And you may grope for me in vain  
In hollows under the mangrove root,  
Or where, in apple-scented rain,  
The silver wasp-nests hang like fruit.

*Hymn to Earth*

FAREWELL, incomparable element,  
Whence man arose, where he shall not return;  
And hail, imperfect urn  
Of his last ashes, and his firstborn fruit;  
Farewell, the long pursuit,  
And all the adventures of his discontent;  
The voyages which sent  
His heart averse from home:  
Metal of clay, permit him that he come  
To thy slow-burning fire as to a hearth;  
Accept him as a particle of earth.

Fire, being divided from the other three,  
It lives removed, or secret at the core;  
Most subtle of the four,  
When air flies not, nor water flows,  
It disembodied goes,  
Being light, elixir of the first decree,  
More volatile than he;  
With strength and power to pass  
Through space, where never his least atom was:  
He has no part in it, save as his eyes  
Have drawn its emanation from the skies.

A wingless creature heavier than air,  
He is rejected of its quintessence;  
Coming and going hence,  
In the twin minutes of his birth and death,  
He may inhale as breath,  
As breath relinquish heaven's atmosphere,  
Yet in it have no share,  
Nor can survive therein  
Where its outer edge is filtered pure and thin:  
It doth but lend its crystal to his lungs  
For his early crying, and his final songs.

The element of water has denied  
Its child; it is no more his element;  
It never will relent;  
Its silver harvests are more sparsely given  
Than the rewards of heaven,  
And he shall drink cold comfort at its side:  
The water is too wide:  
The seamew and the gull  
Feather a nest made soft and pitiful  
Upon its foam; he has not any part  
In the long swell of sorrow at its heart.

Hail and farewell, beloved element,  
Whence he departed, and his parent once;  
See where thy spirit runs  
Which for so long hath had the moon to wife;  
Shall this support his life  
Until the arches of the waves be bent  
And grow shallow and spent?  
Wisely it cast him forth  
With his dead weight of burdens nothing worth,  
Leaving him, for the universal years,  
A little seawater to make his tears.

Hail, element of earth, receive thy own,  
And cherish, at thy charitable breast,  
This man, this mongrel beast:  
He ploughs the sand, and, at his hardest need,  
He sows himself for seed;  
He ploughs the furrow, and in this lies down  
Before the corn is grown;  
Between the apple bloom  
And the ripe apple is sufficient room  
In time, and the matter, to consume his love  
And make him parcel of a cypress grove.

Receive him as thy lover for an hour  
Who will not weary, by a longer stay,  
The kind embrace of clay;

Even within thine arms he is dispersed  
To nothing, as at first;  
The air flings downward from its four-quartered tower  
Him whom the flames devour;  
At the full tide, at the flood,  
The sea is mingled with his salty blood:  
The traveller dust, although the dust be vile,  
Sleeps as thy lover for a little while.

### *Minotaur*

GO study to disdain  
The frail, the over-fine  
Which tapers to a line  
Knotted about the brain.

Unscrupulous to pinch  
And polish down the thin  
And fire-encasing skin:  
Which pares away an inch

Of valuable soil  
Whereon a god took root,  
Diminishing a brute  
With pumice and with oil.

Distrust the exquisite,  
The sharpened silver nerve,  
The lacquered, nacre curve  
Wherein a moon is lit.

Aristocratic skulls  
Rejected as inept  
That innocence kept  
'Twixt orbèd eyes of bulls.

Black lava-crustèd coins  
Bear heavy brow and limb,

The monstrous stamp of him  
Who sprang from Taurine loins.

Gaze ever and at length  
Upon the carven head,  
Devouring it as bread  
To thrive upon its strength.

The sword-deflecting scar  
Indented and oblique  
That stripes the savage cheek;  
The throat made columnar

In copper, and up-raised  
To such a trumpet shape  
No clangour can escape,—  
These only must be praised.

This only is the cure,  
To clasp the creature fast;  
The flesh survives at last  
Because it is not pure.

From flesh refined to glass  
A god goes desert-ward,  
Astride a spotted pard,  
Between an ox and ass.

Let innocence enchant  
The flesh to fiercer grain  
More fitted to retain  
This burning visitant.

### *Confession of Faith*

I LACK the braver mind  
That dares to find  
The lover friend, and kind.

I fear him to the bone;  
I lie alone  
By the beloved one,

And, breathless for suspense,  
Erect defense  
Against love's violence

Whose silences portend  
A bloody end  
For lover never friend.

But, in default of faith,  
In futile breath,  
I dream no ill of Death.

### *True Vine*

THERE is a serpent in perfection tarnished  
The thin shell pierced, the purity grown fainter,  
The virgin silver shield no longer burnished,  
The pearly fruit with ruin at its centre.

The thing that sits expectant in our bosoms  
Contriving heaven out of very little  
Demands such delicate immaculate blossoms  
As no malicious verity makes brittle.

This wild fastidious hope is quick to languish;  
Its smooth diaphanous escape is swifter  
Than the pack of truth; no mortal can distinguish  
Its trace upon the durable hereafter.

Not so the obdurate and savage lovely  
Whose roots are set profoundly upon trouble;  
This flower grows so fiercely and so bravely  
It does not even know that it is noble.

This is the vine to love, whose balsams flourish  
Upon a living soil corrupt and faulty,  
Whose leaves have drunk the skies, and stooped to nourish  
The earth again with honey sweet and salty.

---

EZRA POUND

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*The Tree*

I STOOD still and was a tree amid the wood,  
Knowing the truth of things unseen before;  
Of Daphne and the laurel bough  
And that god-feasting couple old  
That grew elm-oak amid the wold.  
'Twas not until the gods had been  
Kindly entreated, and been brought within  
Unto the hearth of their heart's home  
That they might do this wonder thing;  
Nathless I have been a tree amid the wood  
And many a new thing understood  
That was rank folly to my head before.

*The Tomb of Akır Çaar*

I AM thy soul, Nikoptis. I have watched  
These five millennia, and thy dead eyes  
Moved not, nor ever answer my desire,  
And thy light limbs, wherethrough I leapt aflame,  
Burn not with me nor any saffron thing.

See, the light grass sprang up to pillow thee,  
And kissed thee with a myriad grassy tongues;



But not thou me.  
 I have read out the gold upon the wall,  
 And wearied out my thought upon the signs.  
 And there is no new thing in all this place.

I have been kind. See, I have left the jars sealed,  
 Lest thou shouldst wake and whimper for thy wine.  
 And all thy robes I have kept smooth on thee.  
 O thou unmindful! How should I forget!  
 —Even the river many days ago,  
 The river? thou wast over young.  
 And three souls came upon Thee—  
 And I came.  
 And I flowed in upon thee, beat them off;  
 I have been intimate with thee, known thy ways.  
 Have I not touched thy palms and finger-tips,  
 Flowed in, and through thee and about thy heels?  
 How 'came I in'? Was I not thee and Thee?

And no sun comes to rest me in this place,  
 And I am torn against the jagged dark,  
 And no light beats upon me, and you say  
 No word, day after day.

Oh! I could get me out, despite the marks  
 And all their crafty work upon the door,  
 Out through the glass-green fields. . . .

. . . . .

Yet it is quiet here:

I do not go."

### *Portrait d'une Femme*

YOUR mind and you are our Sargasso Sea,  
 London has swept about you this score years

And bright ships left you this or that in fee:  
Ideas, old gossip, oddments of all things,  
Strange spars of knowledge and dimmed wares of price.  
Great minds have sought you—lacking someone else.  
You have been second always. Tragical?  
No. You preferred it to the usual thing:  
One dull man, dulling and uxorious,  
One average mind—with one thought less, each year.  
Oh, you are patient, I have seen you sit  
Hours, where something might have floated up.  
And now you pay one. Yes, you richly pay.  
You are a person of some interest, one comes to you  
And takes strange gain away:  
Trophies fished up; some curious suggestion;  
Fact that leads nowhere; and a tale or two,  
Pregnant with mandrakes, or with something else  
That might prove useful and yet never proves,  
That never fits a corner or shows use,  
Or finds its hour upon the loom of days:  
The tarnished, gaudy, wonderful old work;  
Idols and ambergris and rare inlays,  
These are your riches, your great store; and yet  
For all this sea-hoard of deciduous things,  
Strange woods half sodden, and new brighter stuff:  
In the slow float of differing light and deep,  
No! there is nothing! In the whole and all,  
Nothing that's quite your own.  
Yet this is you.

### *Apparuit*

GOLDEN rose the house, in the portal I saw  
thee, a marvel, carven in subtle stuff, a  
portent. Life died down in the lamp and flickered,  
caught at the wonder.

Crimson, frosty with dew, the roses bend where  
thou afar, moving in the glamorous sun,

drinkst in life of earth, of the air, the tissue  
golden about thee.

Green the ways, the breath of the fields is thine there,  
open lies the land, yet the steely going  
darkly hast thou dared and the dreaded æther  
parted before thee.

Swift at courage thou in the shell of gold, cast-  
ing a-loose the cloak of the body, camest  
straight, then shone thine oriel and the stunned light  
faded about thee.

Half the graven shoulder, the throat aflash with  
strands of light inwoven about it, loveli-  
est of all things, frail alabaster, ah me!  
swift in departing.

Clothed in goldish weft, delicately perfect,  
gone as wind! The cloth of the magical hands:  
Thou a slight thing, thou in access of cunning  
dar'dst to assume this?

### *A Virginal*

"**N**O, no! Go from me. I have left her lately.  
I will not spoil my sheath with lesser brightness.  
For my surrounding air hath a new lightness;  
Slight are her arms, yet they have bound me straitly  
And left me cloaked as with a gauze of æther;  
As with sweet leaves; as with subtle clearness.  
Oh, I have picked up magic in her nearness  
To sheathe me half in half the things that sheathe her.  
No, no! Go from me. I have still the flavour,  
Soft as spring wind that's come from birchen bowers.  
Green come the shoots, aye April in the branches,  
As winter's wound with her sleight hand she staunches,  
Hath of the trees a likeness of the savour:  
As white their bark, so white this lady's hours."

*The Return*

SEE, they return; ah, see the tentative  
Movements, and the slow feet,  
The trouble in the pace and the uncertain  
Wavering!

See, they return, one, and by one,  
With fear, as half-awakened;  
As if the snow should hesitate  
And murmur in the wind,  
                    and half turned back;  
These were the "Wing'd-with-Awe,"  
                    Inviolable.

Gods of the wingèd shoe!  
With them the silver hounds,  
                    sniffing the trace of air!

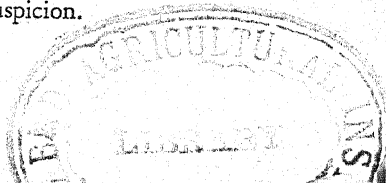
Haie! Haie!

                    These were the swift to harry;  
These the keen-scented;  
These were the souls of blood.

Slow on the leash,  
                    pallid the leash-men!

*The River-Merchant's Wife: A Letter*

WHILE my hair was still cut straight across my forehead  
I played about the front gate, pulling flowers.  
You came by on bamboo stilts, playing horse,  
You walked about my seat, playing with blue plums.  
And we went on living in the village of Chokan:  
Two small people, without dislike or suspicion.



At fourteen I married My Lord you.  
I never laughed, being bashful.  
Lowering my head, I looked at the wall.  
Called to, a thousand times, I never looked back.

At fifteen I stopped scowling,  
I desired my dust to be mingled with yours  
For ever and for ever and for ever.  
Why should I climb the look out?

At sixteen you departed,  
You went into far Ku-to-yen, by the river of swirling eddies,  
And you have been gone five months.  
The monkeys make sorrowful noise overhead.

You dragged your feet when you went out.  
By the gate now, the moss is grown, the different mosses,  
Too deep to clear them away!  
The leaves fall early this autumn, in wind.  
The paired butterflies are already yellow with August  
Over the grass in the West garden;  
They hurt me. I grow older.  
If you are coming down through the narrows of the river Kiang,  
Please let me know beforehand,  
And I will come out to meet you  
As far as Cho-fu-Sa.

*By Rihaku*

### *Dance Figure*

*For the Marriage in Cana of Galilee*

DARK eyed,  
O woman of my dreams,  
Ivory sandalled,  
There is none like thee among the dancers,  
None with swift feet.

I have not found thee in the tents,  
In the broken darkness.  
I have not found thee at the well-head  
Among the women with pitchers.

Thine arms are as a young sapling under the bark;  
Thy face as a river with lights.

White as an almond are thy shoulders;  
As new almonds stripped from the husk.  
They guard thee not with eunuchs;  
Not with bars of copper.

Gilt turquoise and silver are in the place of thy rest.  
A brown robe, with threads of gold woven in patterns, hast thou  
gathered about thee,  
O Nathat-Ikanaie, 'Tree-at-the-river.'

As a rillet among the sedge are thy hands upon me;  
Thy fingers a frosted stream.

Thy maidens are white like pebbles;  
Their music about thee!

There is none like thee among the dancers;  
None with swift feet.

### *Ité*

GO, my songs, seek your praise from the young and from  
the intolerant,  
Move among the lovers of perfection alone.  
Seek ever to stand in the hard Sophoclean light  
And take your wounds from it gladly.

*Lament of the Frontier Guard*

BY the North Gate, the wind blows full of sand,  
Lonely from the beginning of time until now!  
Trees fall, the grass goes yellow with autumn.  
I climb the towers and towers  
to watch out the barbarous land:  
Desolate castle, the sky, the wide desert.  
There is no wall left to this village.  
Bones white with a thousand frosts,  
High heaps, covered with trees and grass;  
Who brought this to pass?  
Who has brought the flaming imperial anger?  
Who has brought the army with drums and with kettle-drums?  
Barbarous kings.  
A gracious spring, turned to blood-ravenous autumn,  
A turmoil of wars-men, spread over the middle kingdom,  
Three hundred and sixty thousand,  
And sorrow sorrow like rain.  
Sorrow to go, and sorrow, sorrow returning.  
Desolate, desolate fields,  
And no children of warfare upon them,  
No longer the men for offence and defence.  
Ah, how shall you know the dreary sorrow at the North Gate,  
With Rihaku's name forgotten,  
And we guardsmen fed to the tigers.

*By Rihaku*

*Taking Leave of a Friend*

BLUE mountains to the north of the walls,  
White river winding about them;  
Here we must make separation  
And go out through a thousand miles of dead grass.  
  
Mind like a floating wide cloud,  
Sunset like the parting of old acquaintances

Who bow over their clasped hands at a distance.  
Our horses neigh to each other  
as we are departing.

*By Rihaku*

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ALFRED KREYMBORG

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*Arabs*

MELANCHOLY lieth dolorously ill,  
One heel full fatally smitten:  
Melancholy twitcheth and sigheth:  
"Must such as I, because of an itch,  
*Move* from the cheery sloth of a couch,  
From watching my valorous nomad musings  
Coming and passing like pilgrims en route  
From mooning philosophy on to the sun—  
Must such as I, almost ready to follow them,  
Legs follow musings as sheep follow bells—  
Must such as I, because of a scratch  
Imprinted by small ignominious teeth  
Of a small, black, common, effeminate witch,  
Surely not one of my bidding—*move?*  
What way is this, God, to make a man move?"  
And his bed-fellow,  
Happiness, petrified, groaneth:  
"What way is this, God, to make a man stone?"



*Nun Snow**A Pantomime of Beads**Earth Voice*

Is she  
Thoughtless of life,  
A lover of imminent death,  
Nun Snow  
Touching her strings of white beads?  
Is it her unseen hands  
Which urge the beads to tremble?  
Does Nun Snow,  
Aware of the death she must die alone,  
Away from the nuns  
Of the green beads,  
Of the ochre and brown,  
Of the purple and black—  
Does she improvise  
Along those soundless strings  
In the worldly hope  
That the answering, friendly tune,  
The faithful, folk-like miracle,  
Will shine in a moment or two?

*Moon Voice*

Or peradventure,  
Are the beads merely wayward,  
On an evening so soft,  
And One Wind  
Is so gentle a mesmerist  
As he draws them and her with his hand?

*Earth Voice*

Was it Full Moon,  
Who contrives tales of this order,  
And himself loves the heroine,  
Nun Snow—

*Wind Voice*

Do you see his beads courting hers?—  
Lascivious monk!—

*Earth Voice*

Was it Full Moon,  
Slyly innocent of guile,  
Propounder of sorrowless whimseys,  
Who breathed that suspicion?  
Is it One Wind,  
The wily, scholarly pedant—  
Is it he who retorts—

*Wind Voice*

Like olden allegros  
In olden sonatas,  
All tales have two themes,  
*She is beautiful,*  
*He is beautiful,*  
With the traditional movement,  
*Their beads court each other,*  
Revealing a cadence as fatally true  
As the sum which follows a one-plus-one—  
So, why inquire further?  
Nay, inquire further,  
Deduce it your fashion!  
Nun Snow,  
As you say,  
Touches her strings of white beads.  
Full Moon,  
Let you add,  
His lute of yellow strings;  
And, our Night  
Is square, nay,  
Our Night  
Is round, nay  
Our Night  
Is a blue balcony—  
And therewith close your inquisition!

*Earth Voice*

Who urged the beads to tremble?  
They're still now!  
Fallen, or cast over me!  
Nun, Moon, and Wind are gone!  
Are they betraying her?—

*Moon Voice*

Ask our Night—

*Earth Voice*

Did the miracle appear?—

*Moon Voice*

Ask our Night,  
Merely a child on a balcony,  
Letting down her hair and  
Black beads, a glissando—  
Ask her what she means,  
Dropping the curtain so soon!

*Manikin and Minikin\***A Bisque-Play*

(Seen through an oval frame, one of the walls of a parlour.  
The wallpaper is a conventionalized pattern. Only the shelf of

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the mantelpiece shows. At each end, seated on pedestals turned slightly away from one another, two aristocratic bisque figures, a boy in delicate cerise and a girl in cornflower blue. Their shadows join in a grotesque silhouette. In the centre, an ancient clock, whose tick acts as the metronome for the sound of their high voices. Presently the mouths of the figures open and shut after the mode of ordinary conversation.)

*She*—Manikin!

*He*—Minikin?

*She*—That fool of a servant has done it again.

*He*—I should say she's more than a fool.

*She*—A meddlesome busybody—

*He*—A brittle-fingered noddy!

*She*—Which way are you looking? What do you see?

*He*—The everlasting armchair,  
The everlasting tiger skin,  
The everlasting yellow, green, and purple books,  
The everlasting portrait of milord—

*She*—Oh these Yankees!—and I see  
The everlasting rattan rocker  
The everlasting samovar,  
The everlasting noisy piano,  
The everlasting portrait of milady—

*He*—Simpering spectacle!

*She*—What does she want, always dusting?

*He*—I should say—

That is, I'd consider the thought—

*She*—You'd consider a lie—

Oh Manikin—

You're trying to defend her!

*He*—I'm not defending her—

*She*—You're trying to—

*He*—I'm not trying to—

*She*—Then what are you trying to—

*He*—Well, I'd venture to say,

If she'd only stay away some morning—

*She*—That's what I say in my dreams!

*He*—She and her broom—

*She*—Her everlasting broom—  
*He*—She wouldn't be sweeping—  
*She*—Every corner, every cranny, every crevice—  
*He*—And the dust wouldn't move—  
*She*—Wouldn't crawl, wouldn't rise, wouldn't fly—  
*He*—And cover us all over—  
*She*—Like a spider-web—ugh!  
*He*—Everlasting dust has been most of our life—  
*She*—Everlasting years and years of dust!  
*He*—You on your lovely blue gown—  
*She*—And you on your manly pink cloak.  
*He*—If she didn't sweep, we wouldn't need dusting—  
*She*—Nor need taking down, I should say—  
*He*—With her stupid, clumsy hands—  
*She*—Her crooked, monkey paws—  
*He*—And we wouldn't need putting back—  
*She*—I with my back to you—  
*He*—I with my back to you.  
*She*—It's been hours, days, weeks—  
    By the sound of that everlasting clock—  
    And the coming of day and the going of day—  
    Since I saw you last!  
*He*—What's the use of the sun  
    With its butterfly wings of light—  
    What's the use of a sun made to see by—  
    If I can't see you!  
*She*—Manikin!  
*He*—Minikin?  
*She*—Say that again!  
*He*—Why should I say it again—don't you know?  
*She*—I know, but sometimes I doubt—  
*He*—Why do you, what do you doubt?  
*She*—Please say it again!  
*He*—What's the use of a sun—  
*She*—What's the use of a sun?  
*He*—That was made to see by—  
*She*—That was made to see by?  
*He*—If I can't see you!  
*She*—Oh, Manikin!

*He*—Minikin?

*She*—If you hadn't said that again,  
My doubt would have filled a balloon.

*He*—Your doubt, which doubt, what doubt?

*She*—And although I can't move,  
Although I can't move unless somebody shoves me,  
One of these days when the sun isn't here,  
I would have slipped over the edge  
Of this everlasting shelf—

*He*—Minikin!

*She*—And fallen to that everlasting floor  
Into so many fragments,  
They'd never paste Minikin together again!

*He*—Minikin, Minikin!

*She*—They'd have to set another here—  
Some Ninikin, I'm assured!

*He*—Why do you chatter so, prattle so?

*She*—Because of my doubt—  
Because I'm as positive as I am  
That I sit here with my knees in a knot—  
That that human creature—loves you.

*He*—Loves me?

*She*—And you her!

*He*—Minikin!

*She*—When she takes us down she holds you much longer.

*He*—Minikin!

*She*—I'm sufficiently feminine—  
And certainly old enough—  
I and my hundred and seventy years—  
I can see, I can feel  
By her manner of touching me  
And her flicking me with her mop—  
The creature hates me—  
She'd like to drop me, that's what she would!

*He*—Minikin!

*She*—Don't you venture defending her!  
Booby—you don't know live women!  
When I'm in the right position  
I can note how she fondles you,

Pets you like a parrot with her finger tip,  
Blows a pinch of dust from your eye  
With her softest breath,  
Holds you off at arm's length  
And fixes you with her spider look,  
Actually holds you against her cheek—  
Her rose-tinted cheek—  
Before she releases you!  
If she didn't turn us apart so often,  
I wouldn't charge her with insinuation;  
But now I know she loves you—  
She's as jealous as I am—  
And poor dead me in her live power!  
Manikin?

*He*—Minikin?

*She*—If you could see me—  
The way you see her—

*He*—But I see you—  
See you always—  
See only you!

*She*—If you could see me  
The way you see her,  
You'd still love me,  
You'd love me the way you do her!  
Who made me what I am?  
Who dreamed me in motionless clay?

*He*—Minikin?

*She*—Manikin?

*He*—Will you listen to me?

*She*—No!

*He*—Will you listen to me?

*She*—No.

*He*—Will you listen to me?

*She*—Yes.

*He*—I love you—

*She*—No!

*He*—I've always loved you—

*She*—No.

*He*—You doubt that?

*She*—Yes!

*He*—You doubt that?

*She*—Yes.

*He*—You doubt that?

*She*—No.

You've always loved me—

Yes—

But you don't love me now—

No—

Not since that rose-face encountered your glance—

No.

*He*—Minikin!

*She*—If I could move about the way she can—

If I had feet—

Dainty white feet which could twinkle and twirl—

I'd dance you so prettily

You'd think me a sun butterfly—

If I could let down my hair

And prove you it's longer than larch hair—

If I could raise my black brows

Or shrug my narrow shoulders,

Like a queen or a countess—

If I could turn my head, tilt my head,

This way and that—like a swan—

Ogle my eyes, like a peacock,

Till you'd marvel,

They're green, nay, violet, nay, yellow, nay, gold—

If I could move, only move,

Just the moment of an inch—

You would see what I could be!

It's a change, it's a change,

You men ask of women!

*He*—A change?

*She*—You're eye-sick, heart-sick

Of seeing the same foolish porcelain thing,

A hundred years old,

A hundred and fifty,

And sixty, and seventy—

I don't know how old I am!



*He*—Not an exhalation older than I—  
Not an inhalation younger!  
Minikin?

*She*—Manikin?

*He*—Will you listen to me?

*She*—No!

*He*—Will you listen to me?

*She*—No.

*He*—Will you listen to me?

*She*—Yes.

*He*—I don't love that creature—

*She*—You do.

*He*—I can't love that creature—

*She*—You can.

*He*—Will you listen to me?

*She*—Yes—

If you'll tell me—

If you'll prove me—

So my last particle of dust—

The tiniest speck of a molecule—

The merest electron—

*He*—Are you listening?

*She*—Yes!

*He*—To begin with—

I dislike, suspect, deplore—

I had best say, feel compassion

For what is called, humanity—

Or the animate, as opposed to the inanimate—

*She*—You say that so wisely—

You're such a philosopher—

Say it again!

*He*—That which is able to move

Can never be steadfast, you understand?

Let us consider the creature at hand

To whom you have referred.

With an undue excess of admiration

Adulterated with an undue excess of envy—

*She*—Say that again!

*He*—To begin with—

I can only see part of her at once.

She moves into my vision;

She moves out of my vision;

She is doomed to be wayward.

*She*—Yes, but that which you see of her—

*He*—Is ugly, commonplace, unsightly.

Her face a rose-face?

It's veined with blood and the skin of it wrinkles—

Her eyes are ever so near to a hen's—

Her movements,

If one would pay such a gait with regard—

Her gait is unspeakably ungainly—

Her hair—

*She*—Her hair?

*He*—Luckily I've never seen it down—

I daresay it comes down in the dark,

When it looks, most assuredly, like tangled weeds—

*She*—Again, Manikin, that dulcet phrase!

*He*—Even were she beautiful,

She were never so beautiful as thou!

*She*—Now you're a poet, Manikin!

*He*—Even were she so beautiful as thou—

Lending her your eyes,

And the exquisite head which holds them—

Like a cup two last beads of wine,

Like a stone two last drops of rain,

Green, nay, violet, nay, yellow, nay, gold—

*She*—Faster, Manikin!

*He*—I can't, Minikin!

Words were never given to man

To phrase such a one as you are—

Inanimate symbols

Can never embrace, embody, hold

The animate dream that you are—

I must cease.

*She*—Manikin!

*He*—And even were she so beautiful as thou,

She couldn't stay beautiful.

*She*—Stay beautiful?

*He*—Humans change with each going moment.  
That is a grey-haired platitude.  
Just as I can see that creature  
Only when she touches my vision,  
So I could only see her once, were she beautiful—  
At best, twice or thrice—  
You're more precious than when you came!

*She*—And you!

*He*—Human pathos penetrates still deeper  
When one determines their inner life,  
As we've pondered their outer.  
Their inner changes far more desperately.

*She*—How so, wise Manikin?

*He*—They have what philosophy terms, moods,  
And moods are more pervious to modulation  
Than pools to idle breezes.  
These people may say, to begin with—  
I love you.  
This may be true, I'm assured—  
As true as when *we* say, I love you.  
But they can only say,  
I love you,  
So long as the mood breathes,  
So long as the breezes blow,  
So long as water remains wet.  
They are honest—  
They mean what they say—  
Passionately, tenaciously, tragically—  
But when the mood languishes,  
They have to say,  
If it be they are honest—  
I do not love you.  
Or they have to say,  
I love you,  
To somebody else.

*She*—To somebody else?

*He*—Now, you and I—  
We've said that to each other—  
We've had to say it

For a hundred and seventy years—

And we'll have to say it, always.

*She*—Say always again!

*He*—The life of an animate—

*She*—Say always again!

*He*—Always!

The life of an animate

Is a procession of deaths

With but a secret sorrowing candle,

Guttering lower and lower,

On the path to the grave—

The life of an inanimate

Is as serenely enduring—

As all still things are.

*She*—Still things?

*He*—Recall our childhood in the English museum—

Ere we were moved,

From place to place,

To this dreadful Yankee salon—

Do you remember

That little old Greek tanagra

Of the girl with a head like a bud—

That little old Roman medallion

Of the girl with a head like a—

*She*—Manikin, Manikin—

Were they so beautiful as I—

Did you love them too—

Why do you bring them back?

*He*—They were not so beautiful as thou—

I spoke of them—

Recalled, designated them—

Well, because they were ages old—

And—and—

*She*—And—and?

*He*—And we might live as long as they—

As they did and do!

I hinted their existence

Because they're not so beautiful as thou,

So that by contrast and deduction—

*She*—And deduction?

*He*—You know what I'd say—

*She*—But say it again!

*He*—I love you.

*She*—Manikin?

*He*—Minikin?

*She*—Then even though that creature has turned us apart,  
Can you see me?

*He*—I can see you.

*She*—Even though you haven't seen me  
For hours, days, weeks—  
With your dear blue eyes—  
You can see me—  
With your hidden ones?

*He*—I can see you.

*She*—Even though you are still,  
And calm, and smooth,  
And lovely outside—  
You aren't still and calm  
And smooth and lovely inside?

*He*—Lovely, yes—  
But not still and calm and smooth!

*She*—Which way are you looking? What do you see?

*He*—I look at you.  
I see you.

*She*—And if that fool of a servant—  
Oh, Manikin—  
Suppose she should break the future—  
Our great happy centuries ahead—  
By dropping me, throwing me down?

*He*—I should take an immediate step  
Off this everlasting shelf—

*She*—But you cannot move!

*He*—The good wind would give me a blow!

*She*—Now you're a punster!  
And what would your fragments do?

*He*—They'd do what Manikin did.

*She*—Say that again!

*He*—They'd do what Manikin did. . . .

*She*—Manikin?

*He*—Minikin?

*She*—Shall I tell you something?

*He*—Tell me something.

*She*—Are you listening?

*He*—With my inner ears.

*She*—I wasn't jealous of that woman—

*He*—You weren't jealous?

*She*—I wanted to hear you talk—

*He*—You wanted to hear me talk?

*She*—You talk so wonderfully!

*He*—Do I, indeed? What a booby I am!

*She*—And I wanted to hear you say—

*He*—You cheat, you idler, you—

*She*—Woman—

*He*—Dissembler!

*She*—Manikin?

*He*—Minikin?

*She*—Everlastingly?

*He*—Everlastingly.

*She*—Say it again!

*He*—I refuse—

*She*—You refuse?

*He*—Well—

*She*—Well?

*He*—You have ears outside your head—

I'll say that for you—

But they'll never hear—

What your other ears hear!

*She*—Say it—

Down one of my ears—

Outside my head?

*He*—I refuse.

*She*—You refuse?

*He*—Leave me alone.

*She*—Manikin?

*He*—I can't say it!

*She*—Manikin!

(The clock goes on ticking for a moment. Its mellow chimes strike the hour. Curtain.)

---

JOHN GOULD FLETCHER

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*Irradiations*

## I

THE spattering of the rain upon pale terraces  
Of afternoon is like the passing of a dream  
Amid the roses shuddering 'gainst the wet green stalks  
Of the streaming trees—the passing of the wind  
Upon the pale lower terraces of my dream  
Is like the crinkling of the wet grey robes  
Of the hours that come to turn over the urn  
Of the day and spill its rainy dream.  
Vague movement over the puddled terraces:  
Heavy gold pennons—a pomp of solemn gardens  
Half hidden under the liquid veil of spring:  
Far trumpets like a vague rout of faded roses  
Burst 'gainst the wet green silence of distant forests:  
A clash of cymbals—then the swift swaying footsteps  
Of the wind that undulates along the languid terraces.  
Pools of rain—the vacant terraces  
Wet, chill and glistening  
Towards the sunset beyond the broken doors of to-day.

## II

The iridescent vibrations of midsummer light  
Dancing, dancing, suddenly flickering and quivering  
Like little feet or the movement of quick hands clapping,  
Or the rustle of furbelows or the clash of polished gems.  
The palpitant mosaic of the midday light  
Colliding, sliding, leaping and lingering:  
O, I could lie on my back all day,  
And mark the mad ballet of the midsummer sky.

## III

Over the roof-tops race the shadows of clouds;  
Like horses the shadows of clouds charge down the street.

Whirlpools of purple and gold,  
Winds from the mountains of cinnabar,  
Lacquered mandarin moments, palanquins swaying and balancing

Amid the vermilion pavilions, against the jade balustrades.  
Glint of the glittering wings of dragon-flies in the light:  
Silver filaments, golden flakes settling downwards,  
Rippling, quivering flutters, repulse and surrender,  
The sun broidered upon the rain,  
The rain rustling with the sun.

Over the roof-tops race the shadows of clouds;  
Like horses the shadows of clouds charge down the street.

## IV

The balancing of gaudy broad pavilions  
Of summer against the insolent breeze:  
The bellying of the sides of striped tents,  
Swelling taut, shuddering in quick collapse,  
Silent under the silence of the sky.

Earth is streaked and spotted  
With great splashes and dapples of sunlight:  
The sun throws an immense circle of hot light upon the world, }  
Rolling slowly in ponderous rhythm  
Darkly, musically forward.  
All is silent under the steep cone of afternoon:  
The sky is imperturbably profound.  
The ultimate divine union seems about to be accomplished,  
All is troubled at the attainment  
Of the inexhaustible infinite.



The rolling and the tossing of the sides of immense pavilions  
Under the whirling wind that screams up the cloudless sky.

## V

Flickering of incessant rain  
On flashing pavements:  
Sudden scurry of umbrellas:  
Bending, recurved blossoms of the storm.

The winds came clanging and clattering  
From long white highroads whipping in ribbons up summits:  
They strew upon the city gusty wafts of apple-blossom,  
And the rustling of innumerable translucent leaves.  
Uneven tinkling, the lazy rain  
Dripping from the eaves.

## VI

The fountain blows its breathless spray  
From me to you and back to me.

Whipped, tossed, curdled,  
Crashing, quivering:  
I hurl kisses like blows upon your lips.  
The dance of a bee drunken with sunlight:  
Irradiant ecstasies, white and gold,  
Sigh and relapse.

The fountain tosses pallid spray  
Far in the sorrowful, silent sky.

## VII

The trees, like great jade elephants,  
Chained, stamp and shake 'neath the gadflies of the breeze;  
The trees lunge and plunge, unruly elephants:  
The clouds are their crimson howdah-canopies,

The sunlight glints like the golden robe of a Shah.  
Would I were tossed on the wrinkled backs of those trees.

## VIII

Brown bed of earth, still fresh and warm with love,  
Now hold me tight:  
Broad field of sky, where the clouds laughing move,  
Fill up my pores with light:  
You trees, now talk to me, chatter and scold or weep,  
Or drowsing stand:  
You winds, now play with me, you wild things creep,  
You boulders, bruise my hand!  
I now am yours and you are mine: it matters not  
What gods herein I see:  
You grow in me, I am rooted to this spot,  
We drink and pass the cup, immortally.

## IX

O seeded grass, you army of little men  
Crawling up the long slope with quivering, quick blades of steel:  
You who storm millions of graves, tiny green tentacles of earth,  
Interlace yourselves tightly over my heart,  
And do not let me go:  
For I would lie here forever and watch with one eye  
The pilgrimaging ants in your dull, savage jungles,  
The while with the other I see the stiff lines of the slope  
Break in mid-air, a wave surprisingly arrested,  
And above them, wavering, dancing, bodiless, colourless, unreal,  
The long thin lazy fingers of the heat.

## X

To-day you shall have but little song from me,  
For I belong to the sunlight.  
This I would not barter for any kingdom.

I am a wheeling swallow,  
Blue all over is my delight.  
I am a drowsy grass-blade  
In the greenest shadow.

### *Blue Symphony*

#### I

THE darkness rolls upward.  
The thick darkness carries with it  
Rain and a ravel of cloud.  
The sun comes forth upon earth.

Palely the dawn  
Leaves me facing timidly  
Old gardens sunken:  
And in the walks is water.

Sombre wreck—autumnal leaves;  
Shadowy roofs  
In the blue mist,  
And a willow-branch that is broken.

Oh, old pagodas of my soul, how you glittered across green trees!  
Blue and cool:  
Blue, tremulously,  
Blow faint puffs of smoke  
Across sombre pools.  
The damp green smell of rotted wood;  
And a heron that cries from out the water.

#### II

Through the upland meadows  
I go alone.

For I dreamed of someone last night  
Who is waiting for me.

Flower and blossom, tell me, do you know of her?

Have the rocks hidden her voice?  
They are very blue and still.

Long upward road that is leading me,  
Light hearted I quit you,  
For the long loose ripples of the meadow-grass  
Invite me to dance upon them.

Quivering grass  
Daintily poised  
For her foot's tripping.  
Oh, blown clouds, could I only race up like you,  
Oh, the last slopes that are sun-drenched and steep!

Look, the sky!  
Across black valleys  
Rise blue-white aloft  
Jagged unwrinkled mountains, ranges of death.

Solitude. Silence.

### III

One chuckles by the brook for me:  
One rages under the stone.  
One makes a spout of his mouth.  
One whispers—one is gone.

One over there on the water  
Spreads cold ripples  
For me  
Enticingly.

The vast dark trees  
Flow like blue veils  
Of tears  
Into the water.  
Sour sprites,  
Moaning and chuckling,  
What have you hidden from me?

"In the palace of the blue stone she lies forever  
Bound hand and foot."

Was it the wind  
That rattled the reeds together?  
Dry reeds,  
A faint shiver in the grasses.

## IV

On the left hand there is a temple:  
And a palace on the right-hand side.  
Foot passengers in scarlet  
Pass over the glittering tide.

Under the bridge  
The old river flows  
Low and monotonous  
Day after day.

I have heard and have seen  
All the news that has been:  
Autumn's gold and Spring's green!

Now in my palace  
I see foot passengers  
Crossing the river:  
Pilgrims of autumn  
in the afternoons.

Lotus pools:  
Petals in the water.  
These are my dreams.

For me silks are outspread.  
I take my ease, unthinking.

## V

And now the lowest pine-branch  
Is drawn across the disc of the sun.  
Old friends who will forget me soon,  
I must go on,  
Towards those blue death-mountains  
I have forgot so long.

In the marsh grasses  
There lies forever  
My last treasure,  
With the hopes of my heart.  
The ice is glazing over,  
Torn lanterns flutter,  
On the leaves is snow.  
In the frosty evening  
Toll the old bell for me  
Once, in the sleepy temple.

Perhaps my soul will hear.

Afterglow:  
Before the stars peep  
I shall creep out into darkness.

*White Symphony*

## I

FORLORN and white,  
Whorls of purity about a golden chalice,  
Immense the peonies  
Flare and shatter their petals over my face.

They slowly turn paler,  
They seem to be melting like blue-grey flakes of ice,  
Thin greyish shivers  
Fluctuating 'mid the dark green lance-thrust of the leaves.

Like snowballs tossed,  
Like soft white butterflies,  
The peonies poise in the twilight.  
And their narcotic insinuating perfume  
Draws me into them  
Shivering with the coolness,  
Aching with the void.  
They kiss the blue chalice of my dreams  
Like a gesture seen for an instant and then lost forever.

Outwards the petals  
Thrust to embrace me,  
Pale daggers of coldness  
Run through my aching breast.

Outwards, still outwards,  
Till on the brink of twilight  
They swirl downwards silently,  
Flurry of snow in the void.

Outwards, still outwards,  
Till the blue walls are hidden,

And in the blinding white radiance  
Of a whirlpool of clouds, I awake.

Like spraying rockets  
My peonies shower  
Their glories on the night.  
Wavering perfumes,  
Drift about the garden;  
Shadows of the moonlight,  
Drift and ripple over the dew-gemmed leaves.

Soar, crash, and sparkle,  
Shoal of stars drifting  
Like silver fishes,  
Through the black sluggish boughs.  
Towards the impossible,  
Towards the inaccessible,  
Towards the ultimate,  
Towards the silence,  
Towards the eternal,  
These blossoms go.

The peonies spring like rockets in the twilight,  
And out of them all I rise.

## II

Downwards through the blue abyss it slides,  
The white snow-water of my dreams,  
Downwards crashing from slippery rock  
Into the boiling chasm:  
In which no eye dare look, for it is the chasm of death.  
Upwards from the blue abyss it rises,  
The chill water-mist of my dreams;  
Upwards to greyish weeping pines,  
And to skies of autumn ever about my heart,  
It is blue at the beginning,



And blue-white against the grey-greenness;  
It wavers in the upper air,  
Catching unconscious sparkles, a rainbow-glint of sunlight,  
And fading in the sad depths of the sky.

Outwards rush the strong pale clouds,  
Outwards and ever outwards;  
The blue-grey clouds indistinguishable one from another:  
Nervous, sinewy, tossing their arms and brandishing,  
Till on the blue serrations of the horizon  
They drench with their black rain a great peak of changeless  
snow.

As evening came on, I climbed the tower,  
To gaze upon the city far beneath:  
I was not weary of days; but in the evening  
A white mist assembled and gathered over the earth  
And blotted it from sight.  
But to escape :  
To chase with the golden clouds galloping over the horizon:  
Arrows of the northwest wind  
Singing amid them,  
Ruffling up my hair!

As evening came on the distance altered,  
Pale wavering reflections rose from out the city,  
Like sighs or the beckoning of half-invisible hands.  
Monotonously and sluggishly they crept upwards  
A river that had spent itself in some chasm,  
And dwindled and foamed at last at my weary feet.

Autumn! Golden fountains,  
And the winds neighing  
Amid the monotonous hills:  
Desolation of the old gods,  
Rain that lifts and rain that moves away;  
In the green-black torrent  
Scarlet leaves.

It was now perfectly evening:  
And the tower loomed like a gaunt peak in mid-air  
Above the city: its base was utterly lost.  
It was slowly coming on to rain,  
And the immense columns of white mist  
Wavered and broke before the faint-hurled spears.

I will descend the mountains like a shepherd,  
And in the folds of tumultuous misty cities,  
I will put all my thoughts, all my old thoughts, safely to sleep.  
For it is already autumn,  
O whiteness of the pale southwestern sky!  
O wavering dream that was not mine to keep!

In midnight, in mournful moonlight,  
By paths I could not trace,  
I walked in the white garden,  
Each flower had a white face.

Their perfume intoxicated me: thus I began my dream.

I was alone; I had no one to guide me,  
But the moon was like the sun:  
It stooped and kissed each waxen petal,  
One after one.  
Green and white was that garden: diamond rain hung in the  
branches,  
You will not believe it!

In the morning, at the dayspring,  
I wakened, shivering; lo,  
The white garden that blossomed at my feet  
Was a garden hidden in snow.

It was my sorrow to see that all this was a dream.

## III

Blue, clogged with purple,  
Mists uncoil themselves:  
Sparkling to the horizon,  
I see the snow alone.

In the deep blue chasm,  
Boats sleep under gold thatch;  
Icicle-like trees fret  
Faintly rose-touched sky.

Under their heaped snow-eaves,  
Leaden houses shiver.  
Through thin blue crevasses,  
Trickles an icy stream.

The pines groan white-laden,  
The waves shiver, struck by the wind;  
Beyond from treeless horizons,  
Broken snow-peaks crawl to the sea.

Wearily the snow glares,  
Through the grey silence, day after day,  
Mocking the colourless cloudless sky  
With the reflection of death.

There is no smoke through the pine tops,  
No strong red boatmen in pale green reeds,  
No herons to flicker an instant,  
No lanterns to glow with gay ray.

No sails beat up to the harbour,  
With creaking cordage and sailors' song.  
Somnolent, bare-poled, indifferent,  
They sleep, and the city sleeps.

Mid-winter about them casts  
Its dreary fortifications:  
Each day is a gaunt grey rock,  
And death is the last of them all.

Over the sluggish snow,  
Drifts now a pallid weak shower of bloom:  
Boredom of fresh creation,  
Death-weariness of old returns.

White, white blossom,  
Fall of the shattered cups day on day:  
Is there anything here that is not ancient,  
That has not bloomed a thousand years ago?

Under the glare of the white-hot day,  
Under the restless wind-rakes of the winter,  
White blossom or white snow scattered,  
And beneath them, dark, the graves.

Dark graves never changing,  
White dream, drifting, never changing above them:  
O that the white scroll of heaven might be rolled up,  
And the naked red lightning thrust at the smouldering earth!

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H. D.

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*At Baia*

I SHOULD have thought  
In a dream you would have brought.  
Some lovely perilous thing,  
Orchids piled in a great sheath,  
As who would say (in a dream)

I send you this,  
Who left the blue veins  
Of your throat un-kissed.

Why was it that your hands  
(That never took mine)  
Your hands that I could see  
Drift over the orchid heads  
So carefully,  
Your hands, so fragile, sure to lift  
So gently, the fragile flower stuff—  
Ah, ah, how was it

You never sent (in a dream)  
The very form, the very scent,  
Not heavy, not sensuous,  
But perilous—perilous—  
Of orchids, piled in a great sheath,  
And folded underneath on a bright scroll  
Some word:

Flower sent to flower;  
For white hands, the lesser white,  
Less lovely of flower leaf,

Or

Lover to lover, no kiss,  
No touch, but forever and ever this.

### *Not Honey*

NOT honey,  
Not the plunder of the bee  
From meadow or sand-flower  
Or mountain bush;

From winter-flower or shoot  
Born of the later heat:  
Not honey, not the sweet  
Stain on the lips and teeth:  
Not honey, not the deep  
Plunge of soft belly  
And the clinging of the gold-edged  
Pollen-dusted feet.

Not so—  
Though rapture blind my eyes,  
And hunger crisp  
Dark and inert my mouth,  
Not honey, not the south,  
Not the tall stalk  
Of red twin-lilies,  
Nor light branch of fruit tree  
Caught in flexible light branch.

Not honey, not the south;  
Ah, flower of purple iris,  
Flower of white,  
Or of the iris, withering the grass—  
For fleck of the sun's fire,  
Gathers such heat and power,  
That shadow-print is light,  
Cast through the petals  
Of the yellow iris flower.

Not iris—old desire—old passion—  
Old forgetfulness—old pain—  
Not this, nor any flower,  
But if you turn again,  
Seek strength of arm and throat,  
Touch as the god:  
Neglect the lyre-note;  
Knowing that you shall feel,  
About the frame,

No trembling of the string  
But heat more passionate  
Of bone and the white shell  
And fiery tempered steel.

### *Song*

YOU are as gold  
As the half-ripe grain  
That merges to gold again,  
As white as the white rain  
That beats through  
The half-opened flowers  
Of the great flower tufts  
Thick on the black limbs  
Of an Illyrian apple bough.

Can honey distil such fragrance  
As your bright hair—  
For your face is as fair as rain,  
Yet as rain that lies clear  
On white honey-comb,  
Lends radiance to the white wax,  
So your hair on your brow  
Casts light for a shadow.

### *The Garden*

I

YOU are clear,  
O rose, cut in rock.

I could scrape the colour  
From the petals,  
Like spilt dye from a rock.

If I could break you  
I could break a tree.

If I could stir  
I could break a tree,  
I could break you.

II

O wind, rend open the heat,  
Cut apart the heat,  
Slit it to tatters.

Fruit cannot drop  
Through this thick air;  
Fruit cannot fall into heat  
That presses up and blunts  
The points of pears,  
And rounds grapes.

Cut the heat;  
Plough through it,  
Turning it on either side  
Of your path.

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MARIANNE MOORE

---

*The Monkeys*

WINKED too much and were afraid of snakes. The  
zebras, supreme in  
their abnormality; the elephants with their fog-coloured skin  
and strictly practical appendages



were there, the small cats; and the parakeet—  
trivial and humdrum on examination, destroying  
bark and portions of the food it could not eat.

I recall their magnificence, now not more magnificent  
than it is dim. It is difficult to recall the ornament,  
speech, and precise manner of what one might  
call the minor acquaintances twenty  
years back; but I shall not forget him—that Gilgamesh  
among  
the hairy carnivora—that cat with the

wedge-shaped, slate-gray marks on its forelegs and the resolute  
tail,  
astringently remarking, 'They have imposed on us with their  
pale  
half-fledged protestations, trembling about  
in inarticulate frenzy, saying  
it is not for us to understand art; finding it  
all so difficult, examining the thing

as if it were inconceivably arcanic, as symmet-  
rically frigid as if it had been carved out of chrysoprase  
or marble—strict with tension, malignant  
in its power over us and deeper  
than the sea when it proffers flattery in exchange for  
hemp,  
rye, flax, horses, platinum, timber, and fur.'

### *The Fish*

WADE  
through black jade.  
Of the crow-blue mussel-shells, one keeps  
adjusting the ash-heads:  
opening and shutting itself like

an  
injured fan.

The barnacles which encrust the side  
of the wave, cannot hide  
there for the submerged shafts of the

sun,  
split like spun  
glass, move themselves with spotlight swiftness  
into the crevices—  
in and out, illuminating

the  
turquoise sea  
of bodies. The water drives a wedge  
of iron through the iron edge  
of the cliff; whereupon the stars,

pink  
rice-grains, ink  
bespattered jelly-fish, crabs like green  
lilies, and submarine  
toadstools, slide each on the other.

All  
external  
marks of abuse are present on this  
defiant edifice—  
all the physical features of

ac-  
cident—lack  
of cornice, dynamite grooves, burns, and  
hatchet strokes, these things stand  
out on it; the chasm-side is

dead.  
Repeated  
evidence has proved that it can live  
on what cannot revive  
its youth. The sea grows old in it.

*Poetry*

I, TOO, dislike it: there are things that are important beyond all this fiddle.

Reading it, however, with a perfect contempt for it, one discovers in

it after all, a place for the genuine.

Hands that can grasp, eyes  
that can dilate, hair that can rise

if it must, these things are important not because a

high-sounding interpretation can be put upon them but because they are

useful. When they become so derivative as to become unintelligible,

the same thing may be said for all of us, that we do not admire what

we cannot understand: the bat

holding on upside down or in quest of something to

eat, elephants pushing, a wild horse taking a roll, a tireless wolf under

a tree, the immovable critic twitching his skin like a horse that feels a flea, the base-

ball fan, the statistician—

nor is it valid

to discriminate against 'business documents and

school-books'; all these phenomena are important. One must make a distinction

however: when dragged into prominence by half poets, the result is not poetry,

nor till the poets among us can be

'literalists of

the imagination'—above

insolence and triviality and can present

for inspection, imaginary gardens with real toads in them, shall we have

it. In the meantime, if you demand on the one hand,  
the raw material of poetry in  
all its rawness and  
that which is on the other hand  
genuine, then you are interested in poetry.

*His Shield*

The pin-swin or spine-swine  
(the edgehog miscalled hedgehog) with  
all his edges out,  
echidna and echinoderm in distressed-  
pincushion thorn-fur coats,  
the spiny pig or porcupine,  
the rhino with horned snout,—  
everything is battle-dressed.

Pig-fur won't do, I'll wrap  
myself in salamander-skin  
like Presbyter John.

A lizard in the midst of flames, a firebrand  
that is life, asbestos-  
eyed asbestos-eared with tattooed nap  
and permanent pig on  
the instep; he can withstand

fire and won't drown. In his  
unconquerable country of  
unpompous gusto,  
gold was so common none considered it; greed  
and flattery were

unknown. Though rubies large as tennis-  
balls conjoined in streams so  
that the mountain seemed to bleed,

the inextinguishable  
salamander styled himself but  
presbyter. His shield  
was his humility. In Carpasian

linen coat, flanked by his  
household lion-cubs and sable  
retinue, he revealed  
a formula safer than

an armorer's: the power of relinquishing  
what one would keep; that is freedom.

Become dinosaur-  
skulled, quilled or salamander-wooled, more ironshod  
and javelin-dressed than

a hedgehog battalion of steel; but be  
dull. Don't be envied or  
armed with a measuring-rod.

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ROBINSON JEFFERS

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*Continent's End*

AT the equinox when the earth was veiled in a late rain,  
wreathed with wet poppies, waiting spring,  
The ocean swelled for a far storm and beat its boundary, the  
ground-swell shook the beds of granite.

I gazing at the boundaries of granite and spray, the established  
sea-marks, felt behind me  
Mountain and plain, the immense breadth of the continent, be-  
fore me the mass and doubled stretch of water.

I said: You yoke the Aleutian seal-rocks with the lava and coral  
sowings that flower the south,  
Over your flood the life that sought the sunrise faces ours that  
has followed the evening star.

The long migrations meet across you and it is nothing to you,  
you have forgotten us, mother.  
You were much younger when we crawled out of the womb and  
lay in the sun's eye on the tideline.

It was long and long ago; we have grown proud since then and  
you have grown bitter; life retains  
Your mobile soft unquiet strength; and envies hardness, the  
insolent quietness of stone.

The tides are in our veins, we still mirror the stars, life is your  
child, but there is in me  
Older and harder than life and more impartial, the eye that  
watched before there was an ocean.

That watched you fill your beds out of the condensation of thin  
vapor and watched you change them,  
That saw you soft and violent wear your boundaries down, eat  
rock, shift places with the continents.

Mother, though my song's measure is like your surf-beat's ancient  
rhythm I never learned it of you.  
Before there was any water there were tides of fire, both our  
tones flow from the older fountain.

### *Birds*

THE fierce musical cries of a couple of sparrow hawks  
hunting on the headland,  
Hovering and darting, their heads northwestward,  
Prick like silver arrows shot through a curtain the noise of the  
ocean  
Trampling its granite; their red backs gleam  
Under my window around the stone corners; nothing grace-  
fuller, nothing  
Nimble in the wind. Westward the wave-gleaners,  
The old gray sea-going gulls are gathered together, the north-  
west wind wakening

Their wings to the wild spirals of the wind-dance.  
Fresh as the air, salt as the foam, play birds in the bright wind,  
fly falcons  
Forgetting the oak and the pinewood, come gulls  
From the Carmel sands and the sands at the river-mouth, from  
Lobos and out of the limitless  
Power of the mass of the sea, for a poem  
Needs multitude, multitudes of thoughts, all fierce, all flesh-  
eaters, musically clamorous  
Bright hawks that hover and dart headlong, and ungainly  
Gray hungers fledged with desire of transgression, salt slimed  
beaks, from the sharp  
Rock-shores of the world and the secret waters.

### *Love the Wild Swan*

"**I** HATE my verses, every line, every word.  
Oh pale and brittle pencils ever to try  
One grass-blade's curve, or the throat of one bird  
That clings to twig, ruffled against white sky.  
Oh cracked and twilight mirrors ever to catch  
One color, one glinting flash, of the splendor of things.  
Unlucky hunter, Oh bullets of wax,  
The lion beauty, the wild-swan wings, the storm of the wings."  
—This wild swan of a world is no hunter's game.  
Better bullets than yours would miss the white breast,  
Better mirrors than yours would crack in the flame.  
Does it matter whether you hate your . . . self? At least  
Love your eyes that can see, your mind that can  
Hear the music, the thunder of the wings. Love the wild swan.

*Apology for Bad Dreams*

## I

IN the purple light, heavy with redwood, the slopes drop seaward,  
Headlong convexities of forest, drawn in together to the steep ravine. Below, on the sea-cliff,  
A lonely clearing; a little field of corn by the streamside; a roof under spared trees. Then the ocean  
Like a great stone someone has cut to a sharp edge and polished to shining. Beyond it, the fountain  
And furnace of incredible light flowing up from the sunk sun.  
In the little clearing a woman  
Is punishing a horse; she had tied the halter to a sapling at the edge of the wood, but when the great whip  
Clung to the flanks the creature kicked so hard she feared he would snap the halter; she called from the house  
The young man her son; who fetched a chain tie-rope, they working together  
Noosed the small rusty links round the horse's tongue  
And tied him by the swollen tongue to the tree.  
Seen from this height they are shrunk to insect size.  
Out of all human relation. You cannot distinguish  
The blood dripping from where the chain is fastened,  
The beast shuddering; but the thrust neck and the legs  
Far apart. You can see the whip fall on the flanks . . .  
The gesture of the arm. You cannot see the face of the woman.  
The enormous light beats up out of the west across the cloud-bars of the trade-wind. The ocean  
Darkens, the high clouds brighten, the hills darken together.  
Unbridled and unbelievable beauty  
Covers the evening world . . . not covers, grows apparent out of it, as Venus down there grows out  
From the lit sky. What said the prophet? "I create good: and  
I create evil: I am the Lord."



## II

This coast crying out for tragedy like all beautiful places,  
(The quiet ones ask for quieter suffering: but here the granite  
cliff the gaunt cypresses crown  
Demands what victim? The dykes of red lava and black what  
Titan? The hills like pointed flames  
Beyond Soberanes, the terrible peaks of the bare hills under the  
sun, what immolation?)  
This coast crying out for tragedy like all beautiful places: and  
like the passionate spirit of humanity  
Pain for its bread: God's, many victims', the painful deaths, the  
horrible transfigurements: I said in my heart,  
"Better invent than suffer: imagine victims  
Lest your own flesh be chosen the agonist, or you  
Martyr some creature to the beauty of the place." And I said,  
"Burn sacrifices once a year to magic  
Horror away from the house, this little house here  
You have built over the ocean with your own hands  
Beside the standing boulders: for what are we,  
The beast that walks upright, with speaking lips  
And little hair, to think we should always be fed,  
Sheltered, intact, and self-controlled? We sooner more liable  
Than the other animals. Pain and terror, the insanities of desire;  
not accidents but essential,  
And crowd up from the core:" I imagined victims for those  
wolves, I made them phantoms to follow,  
They have hunted the phantoms and missed the house. It is not  
good to forget over what gulfs the spirit  
Of the beauty of humanity, the petal of a lost flower blown  
seaward by the night-wind, floats to its quietness.

## III

Boulders blunted like an old bear's teeth break up from the  
headland; below them  
All the soil is thick with shells, the tide-rock feasts of a dead  
people.

Here the granite flanks are scarred with ancient fire, the ghosts  
of the tribe  
Crouch in the nights beside the ghost of a fire, they try to re-  
member the sunlight,  
Light has died out of their skies. These have paid something for  
the future  
Luck of the country, while we living keep old griefs in memory:  
though God's  
Envy is not a likely fountain of ruin, to forget evils calls down  
Sudden reminders from the cloud: remembered deaths be our  
redeemers;  
Imagined victims our salvation: white as the half moon at mid-  
night  
Someone flamelike passed me, saying, "I am Tamar Cauldwell,  
I have my desire,"  
Then the voice of the sea returned, when she had gone by, the  
stars to their towers.  
. . . Beautiful country burn again, Point Pinos down to the Sur  
Rivers  
Burn as before with bitter wonders, land and ocean and the  
Carmel water.

## IV

He brays humanity in a mortar to bring the savor  
From the bruised root: a man having bad dreams, who invents  
victims, is only the ape of that God.  
He washes it out with tears and many waters, calcines it with  
fire in the red crucible,  
Deforms it, makes it horrible to itself: the spirit flies out and  
stands naked, he sees the spirit,  
He takes it in the naked ecstasy; it breaks in his hand, the atom  
is broken, the power that massed it  
Cries to the power that moves the stars, "I have come home to  
myself, behold me.  
I bruised myself in the flint mortar and burnt me  
In the red shell, I tortured myself, I flew forth,  
Stood naked of myself and broke me in fragments,

And here am I moving the stars that are me."  
I have seen these ways of God: I know of no reason  
For fire and change and torture and the old returnings.  
He being sufficient might be still. I think they admit no reason;  
they are the ways of my love.  
Unmeasured power, incredible passion, enormous craft: no  
thought apparent but burns darkly  
Smothered with its own smoke in the human brain-vault: no  
thought outside: a certain measure in phenomena:  
The fountains of the boiling stars, the flowers on the foreland,  
the ever-returning roses of dawn.

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MARSDEN HARTLEY

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*Warblers*

AN hundred warblers in the nearest aching gap,  
it seems as though it loved its aching  
filled with hyper-ikonistic misery.  
I did not expect such staggering wealth  
to come to me by dawn-delivered stealth,  
though morning is the time—and spring  
the way love knows of its best being.

All through the leaves a burning  
rush of gilded, swift, whirling wing.  
All warblers of the world have come  
to me, and are in me living—  
I only cool retreat and humble shade  
giving,  
my leaves with excess of sun  
trampled.

I said an hundred warblers came  
to me,  
and now that I am clear, what it  
was, was very near—  
it was but two, or three,  
But—how they fastened me.

### *Indian Point*

WHEN the surf licks with its tongues  
these volcanic personal shapes, which we,  
defining for ourselves as rocks, accept  
them as such, at its feverish incoming—  
isn't it too, in its way, something like  
the plain image of life?  
Those restless entities disturbing solid  
substances with a curious, irrelevant,  
common fret—  
and, like so many simple looking elements, when  
they seem the most playful, it is then that  
they are most dangerous.  
The bright woman looking out to sea  
through the crisp telescope of her advancing  
years,  
there is no doubt but that she discovers the  
same image as the child, who remarks the  
radiant glint of his marbles on the top spray  
of the wave he once played with,  
or as the fringed lace on the dress of a  
Titan's wife—  
the inwash cooling at least the eye with  
a something exceptional white or green or  
blue, too pale almost to mention, if  
frightening to the marrow,  
for many have been sent to their death trusting  
too much while regarding it affectionately,  
the sea.

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T. S. ELIOT

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*The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*

*S'io credesse che mia risposta fosse  
A persona che mai tornasse al mondo,  
Questa fiamma staria senza piu scosse.  
Ma perciocche giammai di questo fondo  
Non torno vivo alcun, s'i'odo il vero,  
Senza tema d'infamia ti rispondo.*

LET us go then, you and I,  
When the evening is spread out against the sky  
Like a patient etherized upon a table;  
Let us go, through certain half-deserted streets,  
The muttering retreats  
Of restless nights in one-night cheap hotels  
And sawdust restaurants with oyster-shells:  
Streets that follow like a tedious argument  
Of insidious intent  
To lead you to an overwhelming question. . . .  
Oh, do not ask, "What is it?"  
Let us go and make our visit.  
In the room the women come and go  
Talking of Michelangelo.  
The yellow fog that rubs its back upon the window-panes,  
The yellow smoke that rubs its muzzle on the window-panes,  
Licked its tongue into the corners of the evening,  
Lingered upon the pools that stand in drains,  
Let fall upon its back the soot that falls from chimneys,  
Slipped by the terrace, made a sudden leap,  
And seeing that it was a soft October night,  
Curled once about the house, and fell asleep,

And indeed there will be time  
For the yellow smoke that slides along the street,  
Rubbing its back upon the window-panes;  
There will be time, there will be time  
To prepare a face to meet the faces that you meet;  
There will be time to murder and create,  
And time for all the works and days of hands  
That lift and drop a question on your plate;  
Time for you and time for me,  
And time yet for a hundred indecisions,  
And for a hundred visions and revisions,  
Before the taking of a toast and tea.  
In the room the women come and go  
Talking of Michelangelo.  
And indeed there will be time  
To wonder, "Do I dare?" and, "Do I dare?"  
Time to turn back and descend the stair,  
With a bald spot in the middle of my hair—  
(They will say: "How his hair is growing thin!")  
My morning coat, my collar mounting firmly to the chin,  
My necktie rich and modest, but asserted by a simple pin—  
(They will say: "But how his arms and legs are thin!")  
Do I dare  
Disturb the universe?  
In a minute there is time  
For decisions and revisions which a minute will reverse.

For I have known them all already, known them all:  
Have known the evenings, mornings, afternoons,  
I have measured out my life with coffee spoons;  
I know the voices dying with a dying fall  
Beneath the music from a farther room.  
So how should I presume?

And I have known the eyes already, known them all—  
The eyes that fix you in a formulated phrase,  
And when I am formulated, sprawling on a pin,  
When I am pinned and wriggling on the wall,  
Then how should I begin

To spit out all the butt-ends of my days and ways?  
And how should I presume?

And I have known the arms already, known them all—  
Arms that are braceleted and white and bare  
(But in the lamplight, downed with light brown hair!)  
Is it perfume from a dress  
That makes me so digress?  
Arms that lie along a table, or wrap about a shawl.  
And should I then presume?  
And how should I begin?

. . . . .

Shall I say, I have gone at dusk through narrow streets  
And watched the smoke that rises from the pipes  
Of lonely men in shirt-sleeves, leaning out of windows? . . .  
I should have been a pair of ragged claws  
Scuttling across the floors of silent seas.

. . . . .

And the afternoon, the evening, sleeps so peacefully!  
Smoothed by long fingers,  
Asleep . . . tired . . . or it malingers,  
Stretched on the floor, here beside you and me.  
Should I, after tea and cakes and ices,  
Have the strength to force the moment to its crisis?  
But though I have wept and fasted, wept and prayed,  
Though I have seen my head (grown slightly bald) brought in  
upon a platter,  
I am no prophet—and here's no great matter;  
I have seen the moment of my greatness flicker,  
And I have seen the eternal Footman hold my coat, and snicker,  
And in short, I was afraid.

And would it have been worth it, after all,  
After the cups, the marmalade, the tea,  
Among the porcelain, among some talk of you and me,  
Would it have been worth while,  
To have bitten off the matter with a smile,

To have squeezed the universe into a ball  
To roll it toward some overwhelming question,  
To say: "I am Lazarus, come from the dead,  
Come back to tell you all, I shall tell you all"—  
If one, settling a pillow by her head,  
Should say: "That was not what I meant at all;  
That is not it, at all."

And would it have been worth it, after all,  
Would it have been worth while,  
After the sunsets and the dooryards and the sprinkled streets,  
After the novels, after the teacups, after the skirts that trail along  
the floor—  
And this, and so much more?—  
It is impossible to say just what I mean!  
But as if a magic lantern threw the nerves in patterns on a screen:  
Would it have been worth while  
If one, settling a pillow or throwing off a shawl,  
And turning toward the window, should say:  
"That is not it at all,  
That is not what I meant at all."

No! I am not Prince Hamlet, nor was meant to be;  
Am an attendant lord, one that will do  
To swell a progress, start a scene or two,  
Advise the prince; no doubt, an easy tool,  
Deferential, glad to be of use,  
Politic, cautious, and meticulous;  
Full of high sentence, but a bit obtuse;  
At times, indeed, almost ridiculous—  
Almost, at times, the Fool.

I grow old . . . I grow old . . .  
I shall wear the bottoms of my trousers rolled.

Shall I part my hair behind? Do I dare to eat a peach?  
I shall wear white flannel trousers, and walk upon the beach.  
I have heard the mermaids singing, each to each.



I do not think that they will sing to me.

I have seen them riding seaward on the waves  
Combing the white hair of the waves blown back  
When the wind blows the water white and black.  
We have lingered in the chambers of the sea  
By sea-girls wreathed with seaweed red and brown  
Till human voices wake us, and we drown.

### *Portrait of a Lady*

*Thou hast committed—*

*Fornication: but that was in another country,  
And besides, the wench is dead.*

*"The Jew of Malta."*

#### I

AMONG the smoke and fog of a December afternoon  
You have the scene arrange itself—as it will seem to do—  
With "I have saved this afternoon for you";  
And four wax candles in the darkened room,  
Four rings of light upon the ceiling overhead,  
An atmosphere of Juliet's tomb  
Prepared for all the things to be said, or left unsaid.  
We have been, let us say, to hear the latest Pole  
Transmit the Preludes, through his hair and finger-tips.  
"So intimate, this Chopin, that I think his soul  
Should be resurrected only among friends  
Some two or three, who will not touch the bloom  
That is rubbed and questioned in the concert room."  
—And so the conversation slips  
Among velleities and carefully caught regrets  
Mingled with remote cornets  
And begins.

"You do not know how much they mean to me, my friends,  
And how, how rare and strange it is, to find  
In a life composed so much, so much of odds and ends,  
(For indeed I do not love it . . . you knew? you are not blind!  
How keen you are!)  
To find a friend who has these qualities,  
Who has, and gives  
Those qualities upon which friendship lives.  
How much it means that I say this to you—  
Without these friendships—life, what *cauchemar!*"  
Among the windings of the violins  
And the ariettes  
Of cracked cornets  
Inside my brain a dull tom-tom begins  
Absurdly hammering a prelude of its own,  
Capricious monotone  
That is at least one definite "false note."  
—Let us take the air, in a tobacco trance,  
Admire the monuments,  
Discuss the late events,  
Correct our watches by the public clocks,  
Then sit for half an hour and drink our bocks.

## II

Now that lilacs are in bloom  
She has a bowl of lilacs in her room  
And twists one in her fingers while she talks.  
"Ah, my friend, you do not know, you do not know  
What life is, you who hold it in your hands";  
(Slowly twisting the lilac stalks)  
"You let it flow from you, you let it flow,  
And youth is cruel, and has no remorse  
And smiles at situations which it cannot see."  
I smile, of course,  
And go on drinking tea.

"Yet with these April sunsets, that somehow recall  
My buried life, and Paris in the Spring,  
I feel immeasurably at peace, and find the world  
To be wonderful and youthful, after all."

The voice returns like the insistent out-of-tune  
Of a broken violin on an August afternoon:  
"I am always sure that you understand  
My feelings, always sure that you feel,  
Sure that across the gulf you reach your hand.  
You are invulnerable, you have no Achilles' heel.  
You will go on, and when you have prevailed  
You can say: at this point many a one has failed.  
But what have I, but what have I, my friend,  
To give you, what can you receive from me?  
Only the friendship and the sympathy  
Of one about to reach her journey's end.  
I shall sit here, serving tea to friends . . ."

I take my hat: how can I make a cowardly amends  
For what she has said to me?

You will see me any morning in the park  
Reading the comics and the sporting page.  
Particularly I remark  
An English countess goes upon the stage.  
A Greek was murdered at a Polish dance,  
Another bank defaulter has confessed.  
I keep my countenance,  
I remain self-possessed  
Except when a street piano, mechanical and tired  
Reiterates some worn-out common song  
With the smell of hyacinths across the garden  
Recalling things that other people have desired.  
Are these ideas right or wrong?

## III

The October night comes down; returning as before,  
Except for a slight sensation of being ill at ease,  
I mount the stairs and turn the handle of the door  
And feel as if I had mounted on my hands and knees.

"And so you are going abroad; and when do you return?  
But that's a useless question.

You hardly know when you are coming back,  
You will find so much to learn."

My smile falls heavily among the bric-à-brac.

"Perhaps you can write to me."

My self-possession flares up for a second;

*This* is as I had reckoned.

"I have been wondering frequently of late

(But our beginnings never know our ends)

Why we have not developed into friends."

I feel like one who smiles, and turning shall remark

Suddenly, his expression in a glass.

My self-possession gutters; we are really in the dark.

"For everybody said so, all our friends,

They were all sure our feelings would relate

So closely! I myself can hardly understand.

We must leave it now to fate.

You will write at any rate.

Perhaps it is not too late.

I shall sit here, serving tea to friends."

And I must borrow every changing shape

To find expression . . . dance, dance

Like a dancing bear,

Cry like a parrot, chatter like an ape.

Let us take the air, in a tobacco trance—

Well! and what if she should die some afternoon,  
Afternoon grey and smoky, evening yellow and rose;

Should die and leave me sitting pen in hand  
 With the smoke coming down above the housetops;  
 Doubtful, for quite a while  
 Not knowing what to feel or if I understand  
 Or whether wise or foolish, tardy or too soon . . .  
 Would she not have the advantage, after all?  
 This music is successful, with a "dying fall"  
 Now that we talk of dying—  
 And should I have the right to smile?

### *Sweeney Among the Nightingales*

ὦμοι πέπληγμαι καιρίαν πλὴγὴν ἔσω.

*Why should I speak of the nightingale? The nightingale sings  
 of adulterous wrong.*

**A**PENECK SWEENEY spreads his knees  
 Letting his arms hang down to laugh,  
 The zebra stripes along his jaw  
 Swelling to maculate giraffe.

The circles of the stormy moon  
 Slide westward to the River Plate,  
 Death and the Raven drift above  
 And Sweeney guards the hornèd gate.

Gloomy Orion and the Dog  
 Are veiled; and hushed the shrunken seas;  
 The person in the Spanish cape  
 Tries to sit on Sweeney's knees

Slips and pulls the table cloth  
 Overturns a coffee cup,  
 Reorganized upon the floor  
 She yawns and draws a stocking up;

The silent man in mocha brown  
Sprawls at the window-sill and gapes;  
The waiter brings in oranges  
Bananas, figs and hot-house grapes;

The silent vertebrate exhales,  
Contracts and concentrates, withdraws;  
Rachel *née* Rabinovitch  
Tears at the grapes with murderous paws;

She and the lady in the cape  
Are suspect, thought to be in league;  
Therefore the man with heavy eyes  
Declines the gambit, shows fatigue,

Leaves the room and reappears  
Outside the window, leaning in,  
Branches of wistaria  
Circumscribe a golden grin;

The host with someone indistinct  
Converses at the door apart,  
The nightingales are singing near  
The Convent of the Sacred Heart,

And sang within the bloody wood  
When Agamemnon cried aloud,  
And let their liquid siftings fall  
To stain the stiff dishonoured shroud.

### *Whispers of Immortality*

WEBSTER was much possessed by death  
And saw the skull beneath the skin;  
And breastless creatures underground  
Leaned backward with a lipless grin.

Daffodil bulbs instead of balls  
Stared from the sockets of the eyes!  
He knew that thought clings round dead limbs  
Tightening its lusts and luxuries.

Donne, I suppose, was such another  
Who found no substitute for sense  
To seize and clutch and penetrate,  
Expert beyond experience.

He knew the anguish of the marrow  
The ague of the skeleton;  
No contact possible to flesh  
Allayed the fever of the bone.

Grishkin is nice; her Russian eye  
Is underlined for emphasis;  
Uncorseted, her friendly bust  
Gives promise of pneumatic bliss.

The couched Brazilian jaguar  
Compels the scampering marmoset  
With subtle effluence of cat;  
Grishkin has a maisonette:

The sleek and sinuous jaguar  
Does not in his arboreal gloom  
Distil so rank a feline smell  
As Grishkin in a drawing-room

And even abstracter entities  
Circumambulate her charm;  
But our lot crawls between dry ribs  
To keep its metaphysics warm.

*Gerontion*

*Thou hast nor youth nor age  
But as it were an after dinner sleep  
Dreaming of both.*

HERE I am, an old man in a dry month,  
Being read to by a boy, waiting for rain.  
I was neither at the hot gates  
Nor fought in the warm rain  
Nor knee deep in the salt marsh, heaving a cutlass,  
Bitten by flies, fought.  
My house is a decayed house,  
And the Jew squats on the window sill, the owner,  
Spawned in some estaminet of Antwerp,  
Blistered in Brussels, patched and peeled in London.  
The goat coughs at night in the field overhead;  
Rocks, moss, stonecrop, iron, merds.  
The woman keeps the kitchen, makes tea,  
Sneezes at evening, poking the peevish gutter.

I an old man,  
A dull head among windy spaces.  
Signs are taken for wonders. "We would see a sign!"  
The word within a word, unable to speak a word,  
Swaddled with darkness. In the juvescence of the year  
Came Christ the tiger.

In depraved May, dogwood and chestnut, flowering judas,  
To be eaten, to be divided, to be drunk  
Among whispers; by Mr. Silvero  
With caressing hands, at Limoges  
Who walked all night in the next room;

By Hakagawa, bowing among the Titians;  
By Madame de Tornquist, in the dark room  
Shifting the candles; Fraulein von Kulp  
Who turned in the hall, one hand on the door. Vacant shuttles  
Weave the wind. I have no ghosts,



An old man in a draughty house  
Under a windy knob.

After such knowledge, what forgiveness? Think now  
History has many cunning passages, contrived corridors  
And issues, deceives with whispering ambitions,  
Guides us by vanities. Think now  
She gives when our attention is distracted  
And what she gives, gives with such supple confusions  
That the giving famishes the craving. Gives too late  
What's not believed in, or if still believed,  
In memory only, reconsidered passion. Gives too soon  
Into weak hands, what's thought can be dispensed with  
Till the refusal propagates a fear. Think  
Neither fear nor courage saves us. Unnatural vices  
Are fathered by our heroism. Virtues  
Are forced upon us by our impudent crimes.  
These tears are shaken from the wrath-bearing tree.

The tiger springs in the new year. Us he devours. Think at last  
We have not reached conclusion, when I  
Stiffen in a rented house. Think at last  
I have not made this show purposelessly  
And it is not by any concitation  
Of the backward devils.  
I would meet you upon this honestly.  
I that was near your heart was removed therefrom  
To lose beauty in terror, terror in inquisition.  
I have lost my passion: why should I need to keep it  
Since what is kept must be adulterated?  
I have lost my sight, smell, hearing, taste and touch:  
How should I use it for your closer contact?

These with a thousand small deliberations  
Protract the profit, of their chilled delirium,  
Excite the membrane, when the sense has cooled,  
With pungent sauces, multiply variety  
In a wilderness of mirrors. What will the spider do,  
Suspend its operations, will the weevil

Delay? De Bailhache, Fresca, Mrs. Cammell, whirled  
Beyond the circuit of the shuddering Bear  
In fractured atoms. Gull against the wind, in the windy straits  
Of Belle Isle, or running on the Horn,  
White feathers in the snow, the Gulf claims,  
And an old man driven by the Trades  
To a sleepy corner.

Tenants of the house,  
Thoughts of a dry brain in a dry season.

### *The Hollow Men*

*A penny for the Old Guy.*

#### I

WE are the hollow men  
We are the stuffed men  
Leaning together  
Headpiece filled with straw. Alas!  
Our dried voices, when  
We whisper together  
Are quiet and meaningless  
As wind and dry grass  
Or rats' feet over broken glass  
In our dry cellar

Shape without form, shade without colour,  
Paralysed force, gesture without motion;

Those who have crossed  
With direct eyes, to death's other Kingdom  
Remember us—if at all—not as lost  
Violent souls, but only  
As the hollow men  
The stuffed men.

## II

Eyes I dare not meet in dreams  
In death's dream kingdom  
These do not appear:  
There, the eyes are  
Sunlight on a broken column  
There, is a tree swinging  
And voices are  
In the wind's singing  
More distant and more solemn  
Than a fading star.

Let me be no nearer  
In death's dream kingdom  
Let me also wear  
Such deliberate disguises  
Rat's coat, crowskin, crossed staves  
In a field  
Behaving as the wind behaves  
No nearer—  
Not that final meeting  
In the twilight kingdom

## III

This is the dead land  
This is cactus land  
Here the stone images  
Are raised, here they receive  
The supplication of a dead man's hand  
Under the twinkle of a fading star.

Is it like this  
In death's other kingdom  
Waking alone  
At the hour when we are  
Trembling with tenderness

Lips that would kiss  
Form prayers to broken stone.

## IV

The eyes are not here  
There are no eyes here  
In this valley of dying stars  
In this hollow valley  
This broken jaw of our lost kingdoms

In this last of meeting places  
We grope together  
And avoid speech  
Gathered on this beach of the tumid river

Sightless, unless  
The eyes reappear  
As the perpetual star  
Multifoliate rose  
Of death's twilight kingdom  
The hope only  
Of empty men.

## V

*Here we go round the prickly pear  
Prickly pear, prickly pear  
Here we go round the prickly pear  
At five o'clock in the morning.*

Between the idea  
And the reality  
Between the motion  
And the act  
Falls the Shadow  
- *For Thine is the Kingdom.*

Between the conception  
 And the creation  
 Between the emotion  
 And the response  
 Falls the Shadow

*Life is very long.*

Between the desire  
 And the spasm  
 Between the potency  
 And the existence  
 Between the essence  
 And the descent  
 Falls the Shadow.

*For Thine is the Kingdom.*

For Thine is  
 Life is  
 For Thine is the

*This is the way the world ends  
 This is the way the world ends  
 This is the way the world ends  
 Not with a bang but a whimper.*

### *Animula*

'ISSUES from the hand of God, the simple soul'  
 To a flat world of changing lights and noise,  
 To light, dark, dry or damp, chilly or warm;  
 Moving between the legs of tables and of chairs,  
 Rising or falling, grasping at kisses and toys,  
 Advancing boldly, sudden to take alarm,  
 Retreating to the corner of arm and knee,  
 Eager to be reassured, taking pleasure  
 In the fragrant brilliance of the Christmas tree,  
 Pleasure in the wind, the sunlight and the sea;

Studies the sunlit pattern on the floor  
And running stags around a silver tray;  
Confounds the actual and the fanciful,  
Content with playing-cards and kings and queens,  
What the fairies do and what the servants say.  
The heavy burden of the growing soul  
Perplexes and offends more, day by day;  
Week by week, offends and perplexes more  
With the imperatives of 'is and seems'  
And may and may not, desire and control.  
The pain of living and the drug of dreams  
Curl up the small soul in the window seat  
Behind the *Encyclopædia Britannica*.  
Issues from the hand of time the simple soul  
Irresolute and selfish, misshapen, lame,  
Unable to fare forward or retreat,  
Fearing the warm reality, the offered good,  
Denying the importunity of the blood,  
Shadow of its own shadows, spectre in its own gloom,  
Leaving disordered papers in a dusty room;  
Living first in the silence after the viaticum.

Pray for Guiterriez, avid of speed and power,  
For Boudin, blown to pieces,  
For this one who made a great fortune,  
And that one who went his own way.  
Pray for Floret, by the boarhound slain between the yew trees,  
Pray for us now and at the hour of our birth.

### *Marina*

*Quis hic locus, quae regio, quae mundi plaga?*

WHAT seas what shores what grey rocks and what islands  
What water lapping the bow  
And scent of pine and the woodthrush singing through the fog  
What images return  
O my daughter.

Those who sharpen the tooth of the dog, meaning  
Death  
Those who glitter with the glory of the hummingbird, meaning  
Death  
Those who sit in the sty of contentment, meaning  
Death  
Those who suffer the ecstasy of the animals, meaning  
Death

Are become unsubstantial, reduced by a wind,  
A breath of pine, and the woodsong fog  
By this grace dissolved in place

What is this face, less clear and clearer  
The pulse in the arm, less strong and stronger—  
Given or lent? more distant than stars and nearer than the eye

Whispers and small laughter between leaves and hurrying feet  
Under sleep, where all the waters meet.

Bowsprit cracked with ice and paint cracked with heat.  
I made this, I have forgotten  
And remember.  
The rigging weak and the canvas rotten  
Between one June and another September.  
Made this unknowing, half conscious, unknown, my own.  
The garboard strake leaks, the seams need caulking.  
This form, this face, this life  
Living to live in a world of time beyond me; let me  
Resign my life for this life, my speech for that unspoken,  
The awakened, lips parted, the hope, the new ships.

What seas what shores what granite islands towards my timbers  
And woodthrush calling through the fog  
My daughter.

*Ash Wednesday*

## I

BECAUSE I do not hope to turn again  
Because I do not hope  
Because I do not hope to turn  
Desiring this man's gift and that man's scope  
I no longer strive to strive towards such things  
(Why should the aged eagle stretch its wings?)  
Why should I mourn  
The vanished power of the usual reign?

Because I do not hope to know again  
The infirm glory of the positive hour  
Because I do not think  
Because I know I shall not know  
The one veritable transitory power  
Because I cannot drink  
There, where trees flower, and springs flow, for there is nothing  
again

Because I know that time is always time  
And place is always and only place  
And what is actual is actual only for one time  
And only for one place  
I rejoice that things are as they are and  
I renounce the blessed face  
And renounce the voice  
Because I cannot hope to turn again  
Consequently I rejoice, having to construct something  
Upon which to rejoice

And pray to God to have mercy upon us  
And I pray that I may forget  
These matters that with myself I too much discuss  
Too much explain  
Because I do not hope to turn again  
Let these words answer



For what is done, not to be done again  
May the judgment not be too heavy upon us

Because these wings are no longer wings to fly  
But merely vans to beat the air  
The air which is now thoroughly small and dry  
Smaller and dryer than the will  
Teach us to care and not to care  
Teach us to sit still.

Pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death  
Pray for us now and at the hour of our death.

## II

Lady, three white leopards sat under a juniper-tree  
In the cool of the day, having fed to satiety  
On my legs my heart my liver and that which had been contained  
In the hollow round of my skull. And God said  
Shall these bones live? shall these  
Bones live? And that which had been contained  
In the bones (which were already dry) said chirping:  
Because of the goodness of this Lady  
And because of her loveliness, and because  
She honours the Virgin in meditation,  
We shine with brightness. And I who am here dissembled  
Proffer my deeds to oblivion, and my love  
To the posterity of the desert and the fruit of the gourd.  
It is this which recovers  
My guts the strings of my eyes and the indigestible portions  
Which the leopards reject. The Lady is withdrawn  
In a white gown, to contemplation, in a white gown.  
Let the whiteness of bones atone to forgetfulness.  
There is no life in them. As I am forgotten  
And would be forgotten, so I would forget  
Thus devoted, concentrated in purpose. And God said  
Prophecy to the wind, to the wind only for only  
The wind will listen. And the bones sang chirping  
With the burden of the grasshopper, saying

Lady of silences  
Calm and distressed  
Torn and most whole  
Rose of memory  
Rose of forgetfulness  
Exhausted and life-giving  
Worried reposeful  
The single Rose  
Is now the Garden  
Where all loves end  
Terminate torment  
Of love unsatisfied  
The greater torment  
Of love satisfied  
End of the endless  
Journey to no end  
Conclusion of all that  
Is inconclusible  
Speech without word and  
Word of no speech  
Grace to the Mother  
For the Garden  
Where all love ends.

Under a juniper-tree the bones sang, scattered and shining  
We are glad to be scattered, we did little good to each other,  
Under a tree in the cool of the day, with the blessing of sand,  
Forgetting themselves and each other, united  
In the quiet of the desert. This is the land which ye  
Shall divide by lot. And neither division nor unity  
Matters. This is the land. We have our inheritance.

## III

At the first turning of the second stair  
I turned and saw below  
The same shape twisted on the banister  
Under the vapour in the fetid air

Struggling with the devil of the stairs who wears  
The deceitful face of hope and of despair.

At the second turning of the second stair  
I left them twisting, turning below;  
There were no more faces and the stair was dark,  
Damp, jagged, like an old man's mouth drivelling, beyond repair,  
Or the toothed gullet of an aged shark.

At the first turning of the third stair  
Was a slotted window belled like the fig's fruit  
And beyond the hawthorn blossom and a pasture scene  
The broadbacked figure drest in blue and green  
Enchanted the maytime with an antique flute.  
Blown hair is sweet, brown hair over the mouth blown,  
Lilac and brown hair;  
Distraction, music of the flute, stops and steps of the mind over  
the third stair,  
Fading, fading; strength beyond hope and despair  
Climbing the third stair.

Lord, I am not worthy  
Lord, I am not worthy

but speak the word only.

#### IV

Who walked between the violet and the violet  
Who walked between  
The various ranks of varied green  
Going in white and blue, in Mary's colour,  
Talking of trivial things  
In ignorance and in knowledge of eternal dolour  
Who moved among the others as they walked,  
Who then made strong the fountains and made fresh the springs  
Made cool the dry rock and made firm the sand  
In blue of larkspur, blue of Mary's colour,  
Sovegna vos

Here are the years that walk between, bearing  
Away the fiddles and the flutes, restoring  
One who moves in the time between sleep and waking, wearing

White light folded, sheathed about her, folded.  
The new years walk, restoring  
Through a bright cloud of tears, the years, restoring  
With a new verse the ancient rhyme. Redeem  
The time. Redeem  
The unread vision in the higher dream  
While jewelled unicorns draw by the gilded hearse.  
The silent sister veiled in white and blue  
Between the yews, behind the garden god,  
Whose flute is breathless, bent her head and signed but spoke no  
word

But the fountain sprang up and the bird sang down  
Redeem the time, redeem the dream  
The token of the word unheard, unspoken

Till the wind shake a thousand whispers from the yew

And after this our exile

## V

If the lost word is lost, if the spent word is spent  
If the unheard, unspoken  
Word is unspoken, unheard;  
Still is the unspoken word, the Word unheard,  
The Word without a word, the Word within  
The world and for the world;  
And the light shone in darkness and  
Against the Word the unstilled world still whirled  
About the centre of the silent Word.

O my people, what have I done unto thee.

Where shall the word be found, where will the word  
Resound? Not here, there is not enough silence  
Not on the sea or on the islands, not  
On the mainland, in the desert or the rain land,  
For those who walk in darkness  
Both in the day time and in the night time  
The right time and the right place are not here  
No place of grace for those who avoid the face  
No time to rejoice for those who walk among noise and deny the  
voice

Will the veiled sister pray for  
Those who walk in darkness, who chose thee and oppose thee,  
Those who are torn on the horn between season and season, time  
and time, between  
Hour and hour, word and word, power and power, those who  
wait  
In darkness? Will the veiled sister pray  
For children at the gate  
Who will not go away and cannot pray:  
Pray for those who chose and oppose

O my people, what have I done unto thee.

Will the veiled sister between the slender  
Yew trees pray for those who offend her  
And are terrified and cannot surrender  
And affirm before the world and deny between the rocks  
In the last desert between the last blue rocks  
The desert in the garden the garden in the desert  
Of drouth, spitting from the mouth the withered apple-seed.

O my people.

## VI

Although I do not hope to turn again  
Although I do not hope  
Although I do not hope to turn

Wavering between the profit and the loss  
In this brief transit where the dreams cross  
The dreamcrossed twilight between birth and dying  
(Bless me father) though I do not wish to wish these things  
From the wide window towards the granite shore  
The white sails still fly seaward, seaward flying  
Unbroken wings

And the lost heart stiffens and rejoices  
In the lost lilac and the lost sea voices  
And the weak spirit quickens to rebel  
For the bent golden-rod and the lost sea smell  
Quickens to recover  
The cry of quail and the whirling plover  
And the blind eye creates  
The empty forms between the ivory gates  
And smell renews the salt savour of the sandy earth

This is the time of tension between dying and birth  
The place of solitude where three dreams cross  
Between blue rocks  
But when the voices shaken from the yew-tree drift away  
Let the other yew be shaken and reply.

Blessèd sister, holy mother, spirit of the fountain, spirit of the  
garden,  
Suffer us not to mock ourselves with falsehood  
Teach us to care and not to care  
Teach us to sit still  
Even among these rocks,  
Our peace in His will  
And even among these rocks  
Sister, mother  
And spirit of the river, spirit of the sea,  
Suffer me not to be separated

And let my cry come unto Thee.

*Burnt Norton*

τοῦ λόγου δ' ἐόντος ξυνοῦ ζώουσιν οἱ πολλοὶ  
ὥς ἰδίαν ἔχοντες φρόνησιν.

*l. p. 77. Fr. 2.*

ὁδὸς ἄνω κάτω μία καὶ ὡυτή.

*l. p. 89. Fr. 60.*

Diels: *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker* (Herakleitos).

## I

TIME present and time past  
Are both perhaps present in time future,  
And time future contained in time past.  
If all time is eternally present  
All time is unredeemable.  
What might have been is an abstraction  
Remaining a perpetual possibility  
Only in a world of speculation.  
What might have been and what has been  
Point to one end, which is always present.  
Footfalls echo in the memory  
Down the passage which we did not take  
Towards the door we never opened  
Into the rose-garden. My words echo  
Thus, in your mind.

But to what purpose  
Disturbing the dust on a bowl of rose-leaves  
I do not know.

Other echoes  
Inhabit the garden. Shall we follow?  
Quick, said the bird, find them, find them,  
Round the corner. Through the first gate,  
Into our first world, shall we follow  
The deception of the thrush? Into our first world.

There they were, dignified, invisible,  
Moving without pressure, over the dead leaves,  
In the autumn heat, through the vibrant air,  
And the bird called, in response to  
The unheard music hidden in the shrubbery,  
And the unseen eyebeam crossed, for the roses  
Had the look of flowers that are looked at.  
There they were as our guests, accepted and accepting.  
So we moved, and they, in a formal pattern,  
Along the empty alley, into the box circle,  
To look down into the drained pool.  
Dry the pool, dry concrete, brown edged,  
And the pool was filled with water out of sunlight,  
And the lotos rose, quietly, quietly,  
The surface glittered out of heart of light,  
And they were behind us, reflected in the pool.  
Then a cloud passed, and the pool was empty.  
Go, said the bird, for the leaves were full of children,  
Hidden excitedly, containing laughter.  
Go, go, go, said the bird: human kind  
Cannot bear very much reality.  
Time past and time future  
What might have been and what has been  
Point to one end, which is always present.

## II

Garlic and sapphires in the mud  
Clot the bedded axle-tree.  
The trilling wire in the blood  
Sings below inveterate scars  
And reconciles forgotten wars.  
The dance along the artery  
The circulation of the lymph  
Are figured in the drift of stars  
Ascend to summer in the tree  
We move above the moving tree  
In light upon the figured leaf



And hear upon the sodden floor  
Below, the boarhound and the boar  
Pursue their pattern as before  
But reconciled among the stars.

At the still point of the turning world. Neither flesh nor fleshless;  
Neither from nor towards; at the still point, there the dance is,  
But neither arrest nor movement. And do not call it fixity.  
Where past and future are gathered. Neither movement from  
nor towards,  
Neither ascent nor decline. Except for the point, the still point,  
There would be no dance, and there is only the dance.  
I can only say, *there* we have been: but I cannot say where.  
And I cannot say, how long, for that is to place it in time.

The inner freedom from the practical desire,  
The release from action and suffering, release from the inner  
And the outer compulsion, yet surrounded  
By a grace of sense, a white light still and moving,  
*Erhebung* without motion, concentration  
Without elimination, both a new world  
And the old made explicit, understood  
In the completion of its partial ecstasy,  
The resolution of its partial horror.  
Yet the enchainment of past and future  
Woven in the weakness of the changing body,  
Protects mankind from heaven and damnation  
Which flesh cannot endure.

Time past and time future

Allow but a little consciousness.  
To be conscious is not to be in time  
But only in time can the moment in the rose-garden,  
The moment in the arbour where the rain beat,  
The moment in the draughty church at smoke-fall  
Be remembered; involved with past and future.  
Only through time time is conquered.

## III

Here is a place of disaffection  
Time before and time after  
In a dim light: neither daylight  
Investing form with lucid stillness  
Turning shadow into transient beauty  
With slow rotation suggesting permanence  
Nor darkness to purify the soul  
Emptying the sensual with deprivation  
Cleansing affection from the temporal.  
Neither plenitude nor vacancy. Only a flicker  
Over the strained time-ridden faces  
Distracted from distraction by distraction  
Filled with fancies and empty of meaning  
Tumid apathy with no concentration  
Men and bits of paper, whirled by the cold wind  
That blows before and after time,  
Wind in and out of unwholesome lungs  
Time before and time after.  
Eructation of unhealthy souls  
Into the faded air, the torpid  
Driven on the wind that sweeps the gloomy hills of London,  
Hampstead and Clerkenwell, Campden and Putney,  
Highgate, Primrose and Ludgate. Not here  
Not here the darkness, in this twittering world.

Descend lower, descend only  
Into the world of perpetual solitude,  
World not world, but that which is not world,  
Internal darkness, deprivation  
And destitution of all property,  
Dessication of the world of sense,  
Evacuation of the world of fancy,  
Inoperancy of the world of spirit;  
This is the one way, and the other  
Is the same, not in movement  
But abstention from movement; while the world moves  
In appetency, on its metallated ways  
Of time past and time future.

## IV

Time and the bell have buried the day,  
The black cloud carries the sun away.  
Will the sunflower turn to us, will the clematis  
Stray down, bend to us; tendril and spray  
Clutch and cling?  
Chill  
Fingers of yew be curled  
Down on us? After the kingfisher's wing  
Has answered light to light, and is silent, the light is still  
At the still point of the turning world.

## V

Words move, music moves  
Only in time; but that which is only living  
Can only die. Words, after speech, reach  
Into the silence. Only by the form, the pattern,  
Can words or music reach  
The stillness, as a Chinese jar still  
Moves perpetually in its stillness.  
Not the stillness of the violin, while the note lasts,  
Not that only, but the co-existence,  
Or say that the end precedes the beginning,  
And the end and the beginning were always there  
Before the beginning and after the end.  
And all is always now. Words strain,  
Crack and sometimes break, under the burden,  
Under the tension, slip, slide, perish,  
Decay with imprecision, will not stay in place,  
Will not stay still. Shrieking voices  
Scolding, mocking, or merely chattering,  
Always assail them. The Word in the desert  
Is most attacked by voices of temptation,  
The crying shadow in the funeral dance,  
The loud lament of the disconsolate chimera.

The detail of the pattern is movement,  
As in the figure of the ten stairs.  
Desire itself is movement  
Not in itself desirable;  
Love is itself unmoving,  
Only the cause and end of movement,  
Timeless, and undesiring  
Except in the aspect of time  
Caught in the form of limitation  
Between un-being and being.  
Sudden in a shaft of sunlight  
Even while the dust moves  
There rises the hidden laughter  
Of children in the foliage  
Quick now, here, now, always—  
Ridiculous the waste sad time  
Stretching before and after.

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JOHN CROWE RANSOM

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*Bells for John Whiteside's Daughter*

THERE was such speed in her little body,  
And such lightness in her footfall,  
It is no wonder that her brown study  
Astonishes us all.

Her wars were bruited in our high window.  
We looked among orchard trees and beyond,  
Where she took arms against her shadow,  
Or harried unto the pond

The lazy geese, like a snow cloud  
Dripping their snow on the green grass,

Tricking and stopping, sleepy and proud,  
Who cried in goose, Alas,

For the tireless heart within the little  
Lady with rod that made them rise  
From their noon apple-dreams, and scuttle  
Goose-fashion under the skies!

But now go the bells, and we are ready;  
In one house we are sternly stopped  
To say we are vexed at her brown study,  
Lying so primly propped.

### *Lady Lost*

THIS morning, there flew up the lane  
A timid lady-bird to our bird-bath  
And eyed her image dolefully as death;  
This afternoon, knocked on our windowpane  
To be let in from the rain.

And when I caught her eye  
She looked aside, but at the clapping thunder  
And sight of the whole earth blazing up like tinder  
Looked in on us again most miserably,  
Indeed as if she would cry.

So I will go out into the park and say,  
"Who has lost a delicate brown-eyed lady  
In the West End Section? Or has anybody  
Injured some fine woman in some dark way,  
Last night or yesterday?"

"Let the owner come and claim possession,  
No questions will be asked. But stroke her gently  
With loving words, and she will evidently  
Resume her full soft-haired white-breasted fashion,  
And her right home and her right passion."

*Blue Girls*

**T**WIRLING your blue skirts, traveling the sward  
Under the towers of your seminary,  
Go listen to your teachers old and contrary  
Without believing a word.

Tie the white fillets then about your lustrous hair  
And think no more of what will come to pass  
Than bluebirds that go walking on the grass  
And chattering on the air.

Practice your beauty, blue girls, before it fail;  
And I will cry with my loud lips and publish  
Beauty which all our power shall never establish,  
It is so frail.

For I could tell you a story which is true:  
I know a lady with a terrible tongue,  
Blear eyes fallen from blue,  
All her perfections tarnished—and yet it is not long  
Since she was lovelier than any of you.

*Here Lies a Lady*

**H**ERE lies a lady of beauty and high degree.  
Of chills and fever she died, of fever and chills,  
The delight of her husband, her aunts, an infant of three,  
And of medicos marveling sweetly on her ills.

For either she burned, and her confident eyes would blaze,  
And her fingers fly in a manner to puzzle their heads—  
What was she making? Why, nothing; she sat in a maze  
Of old scraps of laces, snipped into curious shreds—

Or this would pass, and the light of her fire decline  
Till she lay discouraged and cold as a thin stalk white and blown,

And would not open her eyes, to kisses, to wine.  
The sixth of these states was her last; the cold settled down.

Sweet ladies, long may ye bloom, and toughly I hope ye may thole,  
But was she not lucky? In flowers and lace and mourning,  
In love and great honor we bade God rest her soul  
After six little spaces of chill, and six of burning.

### *Captain Carpenter*

CAPTAIN CARPENTER rose up in his prime  
Put on his pistols and went riding out  
But had got well nigh nowhere at that time  
Till he fell in with ladies in a rout.

It was a pretty lady and all her train  
That played with him so sweetly but before  
An hour she'd taken a sword with all her main  
And twined him of his nose for evermore.

Captain Carpenter mounted up one day  
And rode straight way into a stranger rogue  
That looked unchristian but be that as it may  
The Captain did not wait upon prologue.

But drew upon him out of his great heart  
The other swung against him with a club  
And cracked his two legs at the shinny part  
And let him roll and stick like any tub.

Captain Carpenter rode many a time  
From male and female took he sundry harms  
He met the wife of Satan crying "I'm  
The she-wolf bids you shall bear no more arms."

Their strokes and counters whistled in the wind  
I wish he had delivered half his blows

But where she should have made off like a hind  
The bitch bit off his arms at the elbows.

And Captain Carpenter parted with his ears  
To a black devil that used him in this wise  
O jesus ere his threescore and ten years  
Another had plucked out his sweet blue eyes.

Captain Carpenter got up on his roan  
And sallied from the gate in hell's despite  
I heard him asking in the grimmest tone  
If any enemy yet there was to fight?

"To any adversary it is fame  
If he risk to be wounded by my tongue  
Or burnt in two beneath my red heart's flame  
Such are the perils he is cast among.

"But if he can he has a pretty choice  
From an anatomy with little to lose  
Whether he cut my tongue and take my voice  
Or whether it be my round red heart he choose."

It was the neatest knave that ever was seen  
Stepping in perfume from his lady's bower  
Who at this word put in his merry mien  
And fell on Captain Carpenter like a tower.

I would not knock old fellows in the dust  
But there lay Captain Carpenter on his back  
His weapons were the old heart in his bust  
And a blade shook between rotten teeth alack.

The rogue in scarlet and gray soon knew his mind  
He wished to get his trophy and depart;  
With gentle apology and touch refined  
He pierced him and produced the Captain's heart.



God's mercy rest on Captain Carpenter now  
I thought him Sirs an honest gentleman  
Citizen husband soldier and scholar enow  
Let jangling kites eat of him if they can.

But God's deep curses follow after those  
That shore him of his goodly nose and ears  
His legs and strong arms at the two elbows  
And eyes that had not watered seventy years.

The curse of hell upon the sleek upstart  
Who got the Captain finally on his back  
And took the red red vitals of his heart  
And made the kites to whet their beaks clack clack.

### *Husband Betrayed*

AND so he called her Pigeon,  
Saying to himself, "She flutters walking  
And in sweet monotone she twitters talking."  
Nothing was said of her religion.

There was wood-wildness in her,—say a dove,  
For doves are pigeons not domesticated  
And whoso catches one is soon frustrated,  
Expecting quick return of love.

At all events she had a snowy bosom  
And trod so mincingly that you would say  
She only wanted wings to fly away,  
Easy and light and lissome.

She pecked her food with ravished cries,  
She sunned her bosom by the wall in the morning,  
Preening prettily in the sun and turning  
In her birdwise.

But there was heavy dudgeon  
When he that should have married him a woman  
To sit and drudge and serve him as was common  
Discovered he had wived a pigeon.

### *Little Boy Blue*

HE rubbed his eyes and wound the silver horn.  
Then the continuum was cracked and torn  
With tumbling imps of music being born.

The blowzy sheep lethargic on the ground  
Suddenly burned where no fire could be found  
And straight up stood their fleeces every pound.

The old bellwether rose and rang his bell,  
The seven-days' lambs went skipping and skipped well,  
And Baa Baa Baa, the flock careered pellmell.

The yellow cows that milked the savoury cud  
Propped on the green grass or the yellow mud  
Felt such a tingle in their lady blood,

They ran and tossed their hooves and horns of blue  
And jumped the fence and gambolled kangaroo,  
Divinely singing as they wandered Moo.

A plague on such a shepherd of the sheep  
That careless boy with pretty cows to keep!  
With such a burden I should never sleep.

But when his notes had run around the sky,  
When they proceeded to grow faint and die,  
He stuffed his horn with straw and put it by.

And when the legs were tired beneath the sheep  
And there were spent and sleepy cows to keep,  
He rubbed his eyes again and went to sleep.

## CONRAD AIKEN

*Preludes to Attitude*

## I

TWO coffees in the Español, the last  
Bright drops of golden Barsac in a goblet,  
Fig paste and candied nuts. . . . Hardy is dead,  
And James and Conrad dead, and Shakspeare dead,  
And old Moore ripens for an obscene grave,  
And Yeats for an arid one; and I, and you—  
What winding sheet for us, what boards and bricks,  
What mummeries, candles, prayers, and pious frauds?  
You shall be lapped in Syrian scarlet, woman,  
And wear your pearls, and your bright bracelets, too,  
Your agate ring, and round your neck shall hang  
Your dark blue lapis with its specks of gold.  
And I, beside you—ah! but will that be?  
For there are dark streams in this dark world, lady,  
Gulf Streams and Arctic currents of the soul;  
And I may be, before our consummation  
Beds us together, cheek by jowl, in earth,  
Swept to another shore, where my white bones  
Will lie unhonored, or defiled by gulls.

What dignity can death bestow on us,  
Who kiss beneath a streetlamp, or hold hands  
Half hidden in a taxi or replete  
With coffee, figs and Barsac make our way  
To a dark bedroom in a wormworn house?  
The aspidistra guards the door; we enter,  
Per aspidistra—then ad astra—is it?—  
And lock ourselves securely in our gloom  
And loose ourselves from terror. . . . Here's my hand,  
The white scar on my thumb, and here's my mouth

To stop your murmur; speechless let us lie,  
And think of Hardy, Shakspeare, Yeats and James;  
Comfort our panic hearts with magic names;  
Stare at the ceiling, where the taxi lamps  
Make ghosts of light; and see, beyond this bed,  
That other bed in which we will not move;  
And, whether joined or separate, will not love.

## II

Sleep: and between the closed eyelids of sleep,  
From the dark spirit's still unresting grief,  
The one tear burns its way. O God, O God,  
What monstrous world is this, whence no escape  
Even in sleep? Between the fast-shut lids  
This one tear comes, hangs on the lashes, falls:  
Symbol of some gigantic dream, that shakes  
The secret-sleeping soul. . . . And I descend  
By a green cliff that fronts the worldlong sea;  
Disastrous shore; where bones of ships and rocks  
Are mixed; and beating waves bring in the sails  
Of unskilled mariners, ill-starred. The gulls  
Fall in a cloud upon foul flotsam there;  
The air resounds with cries of scavengers.

Dream: and between the close-locked lids of dream  
The terrible infinite intrudes its blue:  
Ice: silence: death: the abyss of Nothing.  
O God, O God, let the sore soul have peace.  
Deliver it from this bondage of harsh dreams.  
Release this shadow from its object, this object  
From its shadow. Let the fleet soul go nimbly,—  
Down,—down,—from step to step of dark,—  
From dark to deeper dark, from dark to rest.  
And let no Theseus-thread of memory  
Shine in that labyrinth, or on those stairs,  
To guide her back; nor bring her, where she lies,  
Remembrance of a torn world well forgot.

## III

—You went to the verge, you say, and came back safely?  
Some have not been so fortunate,—some have fallen.  
Children go lightly there, from crag to crag,  
And coign to coign,—where even the goat is wary,—  
And make sport of it. . . . They fling down pebbles,  
Following, with eyes undizzied, the long curve,  
The long slow outward curve, into the abyss,  
As far as eye can follow; and they themselves  
Turn back, unworried, to the here and now. . . .  
But you have been there, too?—

—I saw at length  
The space-defying pine, that on the last  
Outjutting rock has cramped its powerful roots.  
There stood I too: under that tree I stood:  
My hand against its resinous bark: my face  
Turned out and downward to the fourfold kingdom.  
The wind roared from all quarters. The waterfall  
Came down, it seemed, from Heaven. The mighty sound  
Of pouring elements,—earth, air, and water,—  
The cry of eagles, chatter of falling stones,—  
These were the frightful language of that place.  
I understood it ill, but understood.—

—You understood it? Tell me, then, its meaning.  
It was an all, a nothing, or a something?  
Chaos, or divine love, or emptiness?  
Water and earth and air and the sun's fire?  
Or else, a question simply?—

—Water and fire were there,  
And air and earth; there too was emptiness;  
All, and nothing, and something too, and love.  
But these poor words, these squeaks of ours, in which  
We strive to mimic, with strained throats and tongues,  
The spawning and outrageous elements—  
Alas, how paltry are they! For I saw—

—What did you see?

—I saw myself and God.

I saw the ruin in which godhead lives:  
Shapeless and vast: the strewn wreck of the world:  
Sadness unplumbed: misery without bound.  
Wailing I heard, but also I heard joy.  
Wreckage I saw, but also I saw flowers.  
Hatred I saw, but also I saw love. . . .  
And thus, I saw myself.

—And this alone?

—And this alone awaits you, when you dare  
To that sheer verge where horror hangs, and tremble  
Against the falling rock; and, looking down,  
Search the dark kingdom. It is to self you come,—  
And that is God. It is the seed of seeds:  
Seed for disastrous and immortal worlds.

It is the answer that no question asked.

#### IV

Winter for a moment takes the mind; the snow  
Falls past the arclight; icicles guard a wall;  
The wind moans through a crack in the window;  
A keen sparkle of frost is on the sill.  
Only for a moment; as spring too might engage it,  
With a single crocus in the loam, or a pair of birds;  
Or summer with hot grass; or autumn with a yellow leaf.  
Winter is there, outside, is here in me:  
Drapes the planets with snow, deepens the ice on the moon,  
Darkens the darkness that was already darkness.  
The mind too has its snows, its slippery paths,  
Walls bayonnetted with ice, leaves ice-encased.  
Here is the in-drawn room, to which you return

When the wind blows from Arcturus: here is the fire  
At which you warm your hands and glaze your eyes;  
The piano, on which you touch the cold treble;  
Five notes like breaking icicles; and then silence.

The alarm-clock ticks, the pulse keeps time with it,  
Night and the mind are full of sounds. I walk  
From the fire-place, with its imaginary fire,  
To the window, with its imaginary view.  
Darkness, and snow ticking the window: silence,  
And the knocking of chains on a motor-car, the tolling  
Of a bronze bell, dedicated to Christ.  
And then the uprush of angelic wings, the beating  
Of wings demonic, from the abyss of the mind:  
The darkness filled with a feathery whistling, wings  
Numberless as the flakes of angelic snow,  
The deep void swarming with wings and sound of wings,  
The winnowing of chaos, the aliveness  
Of depth and depth and depth dedicated to death.

Here are the bickerings of the inconsequential,  
The chatterings of the ridiculous, the iterations  
Of the meaningless. Memory, like a juggler,  
Tosses its colored balls into the light, and again  
Receives them into darkness. Here is the absurd,  
Grinning like an idiot, and the omnivorous quotidian,  
Which will have its day. A handful of coins,  
Tickets, items from the news, a soiled handkerchief,  
A letter to be answered, notice of a telephone call,  
The petal of a flower in a volume of Shakspeare,  
The program of a concert. The photograph, too,  
Propped on the mantel, and beneath it a dry rosebud;  
The laundry bill, matches, an ash-tray, Utamaro's  
Pearl-fishers. And the rug, on which are still the crumbs  
Of yesterday's feast. These are the void, the night,  
And the angelic wings that make it sound.

What is the flower? It is not a sigh of color,  
Suspuration of purple, sibilation of saffron,

Nor aureate exhalation from the tomb.  
Yet it is these because you think of these,  
An emanation of emanations, fragile  
As light, or glisten, or gleam, or coruscation,  
Creature of brightness, and as brightness brief.  
What is the frost? It is not the sparkle of death,  
The flash of time's wing, seeds of eternity;  
Yet it is these because you think of these.  
And you, because you think of these, are both  
Frost and flower, the bright ambiguous syllable  
Of which the meaning is both no and yes.

Here is the tragic, the distorting mirror  
In which your gesture becomes grandiose;  
Tears form and fall from your magnificent eyes,  
The brow is noble, and the mouth is God's.  
Here is the God who seeks his mother, Chaos,—  
Confusion seeking solution, and life seeking death.  
Here is the rose that woos the icicle; the icicle  
That woos the rose. Here is the silence of silences  
Which dreams of becoming a sound, and the sound  
Which will perfect itself in silence. And all  
These things are only the uprush from the void,  
The wings angelic and demonic, the sound of the abyss  
Dedicated to death. And this is you.

## V

Rimbaud and Verlaine, precious pair of poets,  
Genius in both (but what is genius?) playing  
Chess on a marble table at an inn  
With chestnut blossom falling in blond beer  
And on their hair and between knight and bishop—  
Sunlight squared between them on the chess-board,  
Cirrus in heaven, and a squeal of music  
Blown from the leathern door of St. Sulpice—  
Discussing, between moves, iamb and spondee  
Anacoluthon and the open vowel



God the great peacock with his angel peacocks  
And his dependent peacocks the bright stars:  
Disputing too of fate as Plato loved it,  
Or Sophocles, who hated and admired,  
Or Socrates, who loved and was amused:

Verlaine puts down his pawn upon a leaf  
And closes his long eyes, which are dishonest,  
And says "Rimbaud, there is one thing to do:  
We must take rhetoric, and wring its neck! . . ."  
Rimbaud considers gravely, moves his Queen;  
And then removes himself to Timbuctoo.

And Verlaine dead,—with all his jades and mauves;  
And Rimbaud dead in Marseilles with a vision,  
His leg cut off, as once before his heart;  
And all reported by a later lackey,  
Whose virtue is his tardiness in time.

Let us describe the evening as it is:—  
The stars disposed in heaven as they are:  
Verlaine and Shakspeare rotting, where they rot,  
Rimbaud remembered, and too soon forgot;

Order in all things, logic in the dark;  
Arrangement in the atom and the spark;  
Time in the heart and sequence in the brain—

Such as destroyed Rimbaud and fooled Verlaine.  
And let us then take godhead by the neck—

And strangle it, and with it, rhetoric.

## VI

So, in the evening, to the simple cloister:  
This place of boughs, where sounds of water, softly,  
Lap on the stones. And this is what you are:  
Here, in this dusty room, to which you climb

By four steep flights of stairs. The door is closed:  
The furies of the city howl behind you:  
The last bell plunges rock-like to the sea:  
The horns of taxis wail in vain. You come  
Once more, at evening, to this simple cloister;  
Hushed by the quiet walls, you stand at peace.

What ferns of thought are these, the cool and green,  
Dripping with moisture, that festoon these walls?  
What water-lights are these, whose pallid rings  
Dance with the leaves, or speckle the pale stones?  
What spring is this, that bubbles the cold sand,  
Urging the sluggish grains of white and gold? . . .  
Peace. The delicious silence throngs with ghosts  
Of wingèd sound and shadow. These are you.

Now in the evening, in the simple cloister,  
You stand and wait; you stand and listen, waiting  
For wingèd sounds and wingèd silences,  
And long-remembered shadows. Here the rock  
Lets down its vine of many colored flowers:  
Waiting for you, or waiting for the lizard  
To move his lifted claw, or shift his eye  
Quick as a jewel. Here the lizard waits  
For the slow snake to slide among cold leaves.  
And, on the bough that arches the deep pool,  
Lapped in a sound of water, the brown thrush  
Waits, too, and listens, till his silence makes  
Silence as deep as song. And time becomes  
A timeless crystal, an eternity,  
In which the gone and coming are at peace.

What bird is this, whose silence fills the trees  
With rich delight? What leaves and boughs are these,  
What lizard, and what snake? . . . The bird is gone:  
And while you wait, another comes and goes,—  
Another and another; yet your eye,  
Although it has not moved, can scarcely say  
If birds have come and gone,—so quick, so brief,—

Or if the thrush who waits there is the same . . .  
The snake and lizard change, yet are the same:  
The flowers, many-colored, on the vine,  
Open and close their multitude of stars,—  
Yet are the same. . . . And all these things are you.

Thus in the evening, in the simple cloister,  
Eternity adds ring to ring, the darker  
Beyond the brighter; and your silence fills  
With such a world of worlds,—so still, so deep,—  
As never voice could speak, whether it were  
The ocean's or the bird's. The night comes on:  
You wait and listen, in the darkened room,  
To all these ghosts of change. And they are you.

## VII

Then came I to the shoreless shore of silence,  
Where never summer was nor shade of tree,  
Nor sound of water, nor sweet light of sun,  
But only nothing and the shore of nothing,  
Above, below, around, and in my heart:

Where day was not, nor night, nor space, nor time,  
Where no bird sang; save him of memory,  
Nor footstep marked upon the marl, to guide  
My halting footstep; and I turned for terror,  
Seeking in vain the Pole Star of my thought;

Where it was blown among the shapeless clouds,  
And gone as soon as seen, and scarce recalled,  
Its image lost and I directionless;  
Alone upon the brown sad edge of chaos,  
In the wan evening that was evening always;

Then closed my eyes upon the sea of nothing  
While memory brought back a sea more bright,  
With long, long waves of light, and the swift sun,

And the good trees that bowed upon the wind;  
And stood until grown dizzy with that dream;

Seeking in all that joy of things remembered  
One image, one the dearest, one most bright,  
One face, one star, one daisy, one delight,  
One hour with wings most heavenly and swift,  
One hand the tenderest upon the heart;

But still no image came, save of that sea,  
No tenderer thing than thought of tenderness,  
No heart or daisy brighter than the rest;  
And only sadness at the bright sea lost,  
And mournfulness that all had not been praised.

O lords of chaos, atoms of desire,  
Whirlwind of fruitfulness, destruction's seed,  
Hear now upon the void my late delight,  
The quick brief cry of memory, that knows  
At the dark's edge how great the darkness is.

## VIII

Beloved, let us once more praise the rain.  
Let us discover some new alphabet,  
For this, the often-praised; and be ourselves,  
The rain, the chickweed, and the burdock leaf,  
The green-white privet flower, the spotted stone,  
And all that welcomes rain; the sparrow, too,—  
Who watches with a hard eye, from seclusion,  
Beneath the elm-tree bough, till rain is done.

There is an oriole who, upside down,  
Hangs at his nest, and flicks an orange wing,—  
Under a tree as dead and still as lead;  
There is a single leaf, in all this heaven  
Of leaves, which rain has loosened from its twig:  
The stem breaks, and it falls, but it is caught  
Upon a sister leaf, and thus she hangs;

There is an acorn cup, beside a mushroom,  
Which catches three drops from the stooping cloud.

The timid bee goes back to hive; the fly  
Under the broad leaf of the hollyhock  
Perpend stupid with cold; the raindark snail  
Surveys the wet world from a watery stone . . .  
And still the syllables of water whisper:  
The wheel of cloud whirs slowly: while we wait  
In the dark room; and in your heart I find  
One silver raindrop,—on a hawthorn leaf,—  
Orion in a cobweb, and the World.

## IX

Nothing to say, you say? Then we'll say nothing:  
But step from rug to rug and hold our breaths,  
Count the green ivy-strings against the window,  
The pictures on the wall. Let us exchange  
Pennies of gossip, news from nowhere, names  
Held in despite or honor; we have seen  
The weather-vanes veer westward, and the clouds  
Obedient to the wind; have walked in snow;  
Forgotten and remembered—

But we are strangers;  
Came here by paths which never crossed; and stare  
At the blind mystery of each to each.  
You've seen the sea and mountains? taken ether?  
And slept in hospitals from Rome to Cairo?  
Why so have I; and lost my tonsils, too;  
And drunk the waters of the absolute.  
But is it this we meet for, of an evening,  
Is it this—

O come, like Shelley,  
For god's sake let us sit on honest ground  
And tell harsh stories of the deaths of kings!  
Have out our hearts, confess our blood,

Our foulness and our virtue! I have known  
Such sunsets of despair as god himself  
Might weep for of a Sunday; and then slept  
As dreamlessly as Jesus in his tomb.  
I have had time in one hand, space in the other,  
And mixed them to no purpose. I have seen  
More in a woman's eye than can be liked,  
And less than can be known. And as for you—

O creature of the frost and sunlight, worm  
Uplifted by the atom's joy, receiver  
Of stolen goods, unconscious thief of god—  
Tell me upon this sofa how you came  
From darkness to this darkness, from what terror  
You found this restless pause in terror, learned  
The bitter light you follow. We will talk—

But it is time to go, and I must go;  
And what we thought, and silenced, none shall know.

## X

The first note, simple; the second note, distinct;  
The third note, harsh; the fourth, an innuendo;  
The fifth, a humble triad; and the sixth—  
Suddenly—is the chord of chords, that breaks  
The evening; and from evening calls the angel,  
One voice divinely singing.

Thus, at random,  
This coil of worlds in which we grope; and thus  
Our comings and our goings. So the twilight  
Deepens the hour from rose to purple; so  
One bell-note is the death-note, and completes  
The half-remembered with the soon-forgotten.  
The threes and fives compute our day; we move  
To doom with all things moving.

You and I

Are things compounded of time's heart-beats, stretching  
The vascular instant from the vascular past;  
You, with forgotten worlds, and I with worlds  
Forgotten and remembered. Yet the leaf,  
With all its bleeding veins, is not more torn  
Than you are torn, this moment, from the last.  
Can you rejoin it? Is it here, or there?  
Where is that drop of blood you knew last year?  
Where is that image which you loved, that frame  
Of ghostly apparitions in your thought,  
Alchemic mystery of your childhood, lost  
With all its dizzy colors? . . . It is gone.  
Only the echo's echo can be heard.  
Thrice-mirrored, the ghost pales.

You plunge, poor soul,

From time's colossal brink into that chasm  
Of change and limbo and immortal flux;  
And bring up only, in your blood-stained hands,  
One grain of sand that sparkles. Plunge again,  
Poor diver, among weeds and death! and bring  
The pearl of brightness up. It is this instant  
When all is well with us: when hell and heaven  
Arch in a chord of glory over madness;  
When Pole Star sings to Sirius; and the wave  
Of ultimate Ether breaks on ultimate Nothing.  
The world's a rose which comes this night to flower:  
This evening is its light. And it is we,  
Who, with our harmonies and discords, woven  
Of myriad things forgotten and remembered,  
Urge the vast twilight to immortal bloom.

*Preludes to Definition*

## I

AND there I saw the seed upon the mountain  
but it was not a seed it was a star  
but it was not a star it was a world  
but it was not a world it was a god  
but it was not a god it was a laughter

blood red within and lightning for its rind  
the root came out like gold and it was anger  
the root came out like fire and it was fury  
the root came out like horn and it was purpose  
but it was not a root it was a hand

destructive strong and eager full of blood  
and broke the rocks and set them on each other  
and broke the waters into shafts of light  
and set them end to end and made them seas  
and out of laughter wrung a grief of water

and thus beneath the web of mind I saw  
under the west and east of web I saw  
under the bloodshot spawn of stars I saw  
under the water and the inarticulate laughter  
the coiling down the coiling in the coiling

mean and intense and furious and secret  
profound and evil and despatched in darkness  
shot homeward foully in a filth of effort  
clotted and quick and thick and without aim  
spasm of concentration of the sea

and there I saw the seed upon the shore  
but it was not a seed it was a man  
but it was not a man it was a god  
magnificent and humble in the morning  
with angels poised upon his either hand.



## II

On that wild verge in the late light he stood,  
the last one, who was alone, the naked one,  
wingless unhappy one who had climbed there,  
bruised foot and bruised hand,  
first beholder of the indecipherable land,

the nameless land, the selfless land,  
stood and beheld it from the granite cliff  
the far beneath, the far beyond, the far above,  
water and wind, the cry of the alone  
his own the valley, his own the unthinking stone

and said—as I with labor have shaped this,  
out of a cloud this world of rock and water,  
as I have wrought with thought, or unthinking wrought,  
so that a dream is brought  
in agony and joy to such a realm as this

let now some god take also me and mould me  
some vast and dreadful or divine dream hold me  
and shape me suddenly beyond my purpose  
beyond my power  
to a new wilderness of hour

that I may be to him as this to me,  
out of a cloud made shore and sea,  
instant agony and then the splendid shape  
in which is his escape,  
myself at last only a well-made dream to be—

and as he spoke, his own divine dream took  
sudden kingdom of the wide world, and broke  
the orders into rainbows, the numbers down,  
all things to nothing; and he himself became  
a cloud, in which the lightning dreamed a name.

## III

Still the same function, still the same habit come,  
the endless algebra that marks the mind.  
A leads to b and b to c; we wait  
in vain for change. No sudden Clytemnestra  
walks from the scene and with her takes the world—

or so the sentry said. And watched the moon  
pull half the desert downward as she went,  
involved in silvered trees and dunes and towers  
shadows of spears and whatnot. Moons and moons—  
all gone in one, and all the tides gone too,  
salt blood, salt water. What's left but dark. What's left  
but night, night which is function of the day;  
or so the sentry said.

And saw his feet,  
sandalled, and semi-prehensile, on the sand,  
gripping the moonchilled sand and then releasing,  
forward and back along the wall's foot, turning  
under the fig-tree. Lately it had a shadow,  
but now had none. And "a-prime" leads to "b-prime,"  
build how you will. Nuisance, that there should be  
no wildness left in nature—no chance of dicethrow  
to change the world, or changed then change it back—  
the two plus two makes eight—!

Clytemnestra  
walked on the terrace when the moon had sunk,  
and licked her little finger. Tasted blood.  
Addressed herself: Woman, you've changed the world,  
you should have been a man. And henceforth men—  
use them, use them! Smiled, and walked in the dark,  
and heard, below the wall, the sentry's cough.

## IV

What without speech we knew and could not say  
what without thought we did and could not change  
violence of the hand which the mind thought strange  
let us take these things into another world,  
another dream

what without love we touched pronouncing good  
what without touch we loved and gave no sign  
violence of spirit which only spirit knew divine  
let us take these things into another world,  
another sleep

walk with me heliotrope fly with me sparrow  
come beating of my heart and learn how life is narrow  
how little, and ill, will be remembered by tomorrow  
let us give our lives into another world  
another hand

where like old rocks we shall be heaped forgetful;  
or waste away like stars in fiery stillness;  
no clock with mortal cry to speak our illness;  
let us take our deaths into another time  
another god

come girl, come golden-breasted girl, and walk  
on the so silent and sun-sandalled path  
between the foremath and the aftermath  
let us hurl our joy into another chaos, another wrath  
and make it love

what without speech we know we then shall say  
and all our violence will there be gay  
what without thought we do will be but play  
and our unspoken love as bright as day  
and we shall live.

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EDNA ST. VINCENT MILLAY

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*On Hearing a Symphony of Beethoven*

SWEET sounds, oh, beautiful music, do not cease!  
Reject me not into the world again.  
With you alone is excellence and peace,  
Mankind made plausible, his purpose plain.  
Enchanted in your air benign and shrewd,  
With limbs a-sprawl and empty faces pale,  
The spiteful and the stingy and the rude  
Sleep like the scullions in the fairy-tale.  
This moment is the best the world can give:  
The tranquil blossom on the tortured stem.  
Reject me not, sweet sounds; oh, let me live,  
Till Doom espy my towers and scatter them,  
A city spell-bound under the aging sun.  
Music my rampart, and my only one.

*What Lips My Lips Have Kissed*

WHAT lips my lips have kissed, and where, and why,  
I have forgotten, and what arms have lain  
Under my head till morning; but the rain  
Is full of ghosts tonight, that tap and sigh  
Upon the glass and listen for reply;  
And in my heart there stirs a quiet pain  
For unremembered lads that not again  
Will turn to me at midnight with a cry.

Thus in the winter stands the lonely tree,  
Nor knows what birds have vanished one by one,  
Yet knows its boughs more silent than before:  
I cannot say what loves have come and gone;

I only know that summer sang in me  
A little while, that in me sings no more.

### *Renascence*

ALL I could see from where I stood  
Was three long mountains and a wood;  
I turned and looked another way,  
And saw three islands in a bay.  
So with my eyes I traced the line  
Of the horizon, thin and fine,  
Straight around till I was come  
Back to where I started from;  
And all I saw from where I stood  
Was three long mountains and a wood.  
Over these things I could not see;  
These were the things that bounded me;  
And I could touch them with my hand,—  
Almost, I thought, from where I stand.  
And all at once things seemed so small  
My breath came short, and scarce at all.  
But, sure, the sky is big, I said;  
Miles and miles above my head;  
So here upon my back I'll lie  
And look my fill into the sky.  
And so I looked, and, after all,  
The sky was not so very tall.  
The sky, I said, must somewhere stop,  
And—sure enough!—I see the top.  
The sky, I thought, is not so grand;  
I 'most could touch it with my hand!  
And, reaching up my hand to try,  
I screamed to feel it touch the sky.  
I screamed, and—lo!—Infinity  
Came down and settled over me;  
And, pressing of the Undefined  
The definition on my mind,  
Held up before my eyes a glass

Through which my shrinking sight did pass  
Until it seemed I must behold  
Immensity made manifold;  
Whispered to me a word whose sound  
Deafened the air for worlds around,  
And brought unmuffled to my ears  
The gossiping of friendly spheres,  
The creaking of the tented sky,  
The ticking of Eternity.

I saw and heard, and knew at last  
The How and Why of all things, past,  
And present, and forevermore.  
The universe, cleft to the core,  
Lay open to my probing sense  
That, sick'ning, I would fain pluck thence  
But could not—nay! But needs must suck  
At the great wound, and could not pluck  
My lips away till I had drawn  
All venom out—Ah, fearful pawn!  
For my omniscience paid I toll  
In infinite remorse of soul.  
All sin was of my sinning, all  
Atoning mine, and mine the gall  
Of all regret. Mine was the weight  
Of every brooded wrong, the hate  
That stood behind each envious thrust,  
Mine every greed, mine every lust.  
And all the while for every grief,  
Each suffering, I craved relief  
With individual desire—  
Craved all in vain! And felt fierce fire  
About a thousand people crawl;  
Perished with each—then mourned for all!  
A man was starving in Capri;  
He moved his eyes and looked at me;  
I felt his gaze, I heard his moan,  
And knew his hunger as my own.  
I saw at sea a great fog-bank

Between two ships that struck and sank;  
A thousand screams the heavens smote;  
And every scream tore through my throat.  
No hurt I did not feel, no death  
That was not mine; mine each last breath  
That, crying, met an answering cry  
From the compassion that was I.  
All suffering mine, and mine its rod;  
Mine, pity like the pity of God.  
Ah, awful weight! Infinity  
Pressed down upon the finite me!  
My anguished spirit, like a bird,  
Beating against my lips I heard;  
Yet lay the weight so close about  
There was no room for it without.  
And so beneath the weight lay I  
And suffered death, but could not die.

Deep in the earth I rested now;  
Cool is its hand upon the brow  
And soft its breast beneath the head  
Of one who is so gladly dead.  
And all at once, and over all,  
The pitying rain began to fall;  
I lay and heard each pattering hoof  
Upon my lowly, thatched roof,  
And seemed to love the sound far more  
Than ever I had done before.  
For rain it hath a friendly sound  
To one who's six feet underground;  
And scarce the friendly voice or face:  
A grave is such a quiet place.

The rain, I said, is kind to come  
And speak to me in my new home.  
I would I were alive again  
To kiss the fingers of the rain,  
To drink into my eyes the shine  
Of every slanting silver line,

To catch the freshened, fragrant breeze  
From drenched and dripping apple-trees.  
For soon the shower will be done,  
And then the broad face of the sun  
Will laugh above the rain-soaked earth  
Until the world with answering mirth  
Shakes joyously, and each round drop  
Rolls, twinkling, from its grass-blade top,  
How can I bear it; buried here,  
While overhead the sky grows clear  
And blue again after the storm?  
O, multi-coloured, multiform,  
Beloved beauty over me,  
That I shall never, never see  
Again! Spring-silver, autumn-gold,  
That I shall never more behold!  
Sleeping your myriad magics through,  
Close-sepulchred away from you!  
O God, I cried, give me new birth,  
And put me back upon the earth!  
Upset each cloud's gigantic gourd  
And let the heavy rain, down-poured  
In one big torrent, set me free,  
Washing my grave away from me!  
I ceased; and, through the breathless hush  
That answered me, the far-off rush  
Of herald wings came whispering  
Like music down the vibrant string  
Of my ascending prayer, and—crash!  
Before the wild wind's whistling lash  
The startled storm-clouds reared on high  
And plunged in terror down the sky,  
And the big rain in one black wave  
Fell from the sky and struck my grave.

I know not how such things can be  
I only know there came to me  
A fragrance such as never clings  
To aught save happy living things;



A sound as of some joyous elf  
Singing sweet songs to please himself,  
And, through and over everything,  
A sense of glad awakening.  
The grass, a tip-toe at my ear,  
Whispering to me I could hear;  
I felt the rain's cool finger-tips  
Brushed tenderly across my lips,  
Laid gently on my sealèd sight,  
And all at once the heavy night  
Fell from my eyes and I could see—  
A drenched and dripping apple-tree.  
A last long line of silver rain,  
A sky grown clear and blue again.  
And as I looked a quickening gust  
Of wind blew up to me and thrust  
Into my face a miracle  
Of orchard-breath, and with the smell—  
I know not how such things can be!—  
I breathed my soul back into me.  
Ah! Up then from the ground sprang I  
And hailed the earth with such a cry  
As is not heard save from a man  
Who has been dead, and lives again.  
About the trees my arms I wound;  
Like one gone mad I hugged the ground;  
I raised my quivering arms on high;  
I laughed and laughed into the sky,  
Till at my throat a strangling sob  
Caught fiercely, and a great heart-throb  
Sent instant tears into my eyes;  
O God, I cried, no dark disguise  
Can e'er hereafter hide from me  
Thy radiant identity!  
Thou canst not move across the grass  
But my quick eyes will see Thee pass,  
Nor speak, however silently,  
But my hushed voice will answer Thee.  
I know the path that tells Thy way

Through the cool eve of every day;  
God, I can push the grass apart  
And lay my finger on Thy heart!  
The world stands out on either side  
No wider than the heart is wide;  
Above the world is stretched the sky—  
No higher than the soul is high.  
The heart can push the sea and land  
Farther away on either hand;  
The soul can split the sky in two,  
And let the face of God shine through.  
But East and West will pinch the heart  
That cannot keep them pushed apart;  
And he whose soul is flat—the sky  
Will cave in on him by and by.

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ARCHIBALD MACLEISH

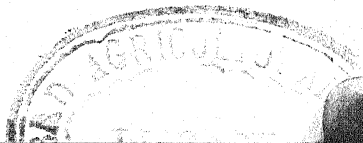
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*L'An Trentiesme de Mon Âge*

AND I have come upon this place  
By lost ways, by a nod, by words,  
By faces, by an old man's face  
At Morlaix lifted to the birds,

By hands upon the tablecloth  
At Aldebori's, by the thin  
Child's hands that opened to the moth  
And let the flutter of the moonlight in,

By hands, by voices, by the voice  
Of Mrs. Husman on the stair,  
By Margaret's "If we had the choice  
To choose or not"—through her thick hair,



By voices, by the creak and fall  
 Of footsteps on the upper floor,  
 By silence waiting in the hall  
 Between the doorbell and the door,

By words, by voices, a lost way—  
 And here above the chimney stack  
 The unknown constellations sway—  
 And by what way shall I go back?

### *The Too-Late Born*

WE too, we too, descending once again  
 The hills of our own land, we too have heard  
 Far off—Ah, que ce cor a longue haleine—  
 The horn of Roland in the passages of Spain,  
 The first, the second blast, the failing third,  
 And with the third turned back and climbed once more  
 The steep road southward, and heard faint the sound  
 Of swords, of horses, the disastrous war,  
 And crossed the dark defile at last, and found  
 At Ronçevaux upon the darkening plain  
 The dead against the dead and on the silent ground  
 The silent slain—

### *Einstein*

STANDING between the sun and moon pre-  
 serves  
 A certain secrecy. Or seems to keep  
 Something inviolate if only that  
 His father was an ape.

Sweet music makes  
 All of his walls sound hollow and he heard  
 Sighs in the panelling and underfoot

Melancholy voices. So there is a door  
 Behind the seamless arras and within  
 A living something:—but no door that will  
 Admit the sunlight nor no windows where  
 The mirror moon can penetrate his bones  
 With cold deflection. He is small and tight  
 And solidly contracted into space  
 Opaque and perpendicular which blots  
 Earth with its shadow. And he terminates  
 In shoes which bearing up against the sphere  
 Attract his concentration,

for he ends

If there why then no farther, as, beyond  
 Extensively the universe itself,  
 Or chronologically the two dates  
 Original and ultimate of time,

Nor could Jehovah and the million stars  
 Staring within their solitudes of light,  
 Nor all night's constellations be contained  
 Between his boundaries,

nor could the sun

Receive him nor his groping roots run down  
 Into the loam and steaming sink of time  
 Where coils the middle serpent and the ooze  
 Breeds maggots.

But it seems assured he ends

Precisely at his shies in proof whereof  
 He can revolve in orbits opposite  
 The orbit of the earth and so refuse  
 All planetary converse. And he wears  
 Clothes that distinguish him from what is not  
 His own circumference, as first a coat  
 Shaped to his back or modelled in reverse  
 Of the surrounding cosmos and below  
 Trousers preserving his detachment from  
 The revolutions of the stars.

His hands

*Einstein  
 upon a public  
 bench  
 Wednesday  
 the ninth  
 contemplates  
 finity*

*Einstein de-  
 scends the  
 Hartmann-  
 sweilerstrasse*

And face go naked and alone converse  
 With what encloses him, as rough and smooth  
 And sound and silence and the intervals  
 Of rippling ether and the swarming motes  
 Clouding a privy: move to them and make  
 Shadows that mirror them within his skull  
 In perpendiculars and curves and planes  
 And bodiless significances blurred  
 As figures undersea and images  
 Patterned from eddies of the air.

Which are  
 Perhaps not shadows but the thing itself  
 And may be understood.

*Einssein  
 ultimately  
 before a  
 mirror  
 accepts the  
 hypobiosis  
 of exterior  
 reality*

#### Decorticate

The petals of the enfolding world and leave  
 A world in reason which is in himself  
 And has his own dimensions. Here do trees  
 Adorn the hillsides and hillsides enrich  
 The hazy marches of the sky and skies  
 Kindle and char to ashes in the wind,  
 And winds blow toward him from the verge, and  
 suns

Rise on his dawn and on his dusk go down  
 And moons prolong his shadow. And he moves  
 Here as within a garden in a close  
 And where he moves the bubble of the world  
 Takes centre and there circle round his head  
 Like golden flies in summer the gold stars.

Disintegrates.

For suddenly he feels

The planet plunge beneath him, and a flare  
 Falls from the upper darkness to the dark  
 And awful shadows loom across the sky  
 That have no life from him and suns go out  
 And livid as a drowned man's face the moon

Floats to the lapsing surface of the night  
And sinks discolored under.

So he knows  
Less than a world and must communicate  
Beyond his knowledge.

Outstretched on the earth  
He plunges both his arms into the swirl  
Of what surrounds him but the yielding grass  
Excludes his finger tips and the soft soil  
Will not endure confusion with his hands,  
Nor will the air receive him nor the light  
Dissolve their difference but recoiling turns  
Back from his touch. By which denial he can  
Crawl on the earth and sense the opposing sun  
But not make answer to them.

Put out leaves  
And let the old remembering wind think through  
A green intelligence, or under sea  
Float out long filaments of amber in  
The numb and wordless revery of tides.

In autumn the black branches dripping rain  
Bruise his uncovered bones and in the spring  
His swollen tips are gorged with aching blood  
That bursts the laurel.

But although they seize  
His sense he has no name for them, no word  
To give them meaning and no utterance  
For what they say. Feel the new summer's sun  
Crawl up the warmed relaxing hide of earth  
And weep for his lost youth, his childhood home  
And a wide water on an inland shore!  
Or to the night's mute asking in the blood  
Give back a girl's name and three notes together!

*Einstein un-  
successfully  
after lunch  
attempts to  
enter,  
essaying  
synthesis  
with what's  
not he, the  
Bernese  
Oberland*

He cannot think the smell of after rain  
 Nor close his thought around the long smooth lag  
 And falter of a wind, nor bring to mind  
 Dusk and the whippoorwill.

*Einstein  
 dissolved in  
 violins in-  
 vades the  
 molecular  
 structure  
 of F. P.  
 Paepke's  
 Sommer-  
 garten.  
 Is repulsed*

But violins  
 Split out of trees and strung to tone can sing  
 Strange nameless words that image to the ear  
 What has no waiting image in the brain.  
 She plays in darkness and the droning wood  
 Dissolves to reverberations of a world  
 Beating in waves against him, till his sense  
 Trembles to rhythm and his naked brain  
 Feels without utterance in form the flesh  
 Of dumb and incommunicable earth,  
 And knows at once, and without knowledge how,  
 The stroke of the blunt rain, and blind receives  
 The sun.

When he a moment occupies  
 The hollow of himself and like an air  
 Pervades all other.

But the violin  
 Presses its dry insistence through the dream  
 That swims above it, shivering its speech  
 Back to a rhythm that becomes again  
 Music and vaguely ravel into sound.

*To Einstein  
 asking at the  
 gate of stone  
 none opens*

So then there is no speech that can resolve  
 Their texture to clear thought and enter them.

The Virgin of Chartres whose bleaching bones still  
 wear

The sapphires of her glory knew a word—  
 That now is three round letters like the three  
 Round empty staring punctures in a skull.  
 And there were words in Rome once and one time  
 Words at Eleusis.

Now there are no words

Nor names to name them and they will not speak  
 But grope against his groping touch and throw  
 The long unmeaning shadows of themselves  
 Across his shadow and resist his sense.

*Einstein  
 bearing be-  
 hind the wall  
 of the Grand  
 Hôtel du  
 Nord the  
 stars dis-  
 covers the  
 Back Stair*

Why then if they resist destroy them. Dumb  
 Yet speak them in their elements. Whole,  
 Break them to reason.

He lies upon his bed  
 Exerting on Arcturus and the moon  
 Forces proportional inversely to  
 The squares of their remoteness, and conceives  
 The universe.

Atomic.

He can count  
 Ocean in atoms and weigh out the air  
 In multiples of one and subdivide  
 Light to its numbers.

If they will not speak  
 Let them be silent in their particles.  
 Let them be dead and he will lie among  
 Their dust and cipher them,—undo the signs  
 Of their unreal identities and free  
 The pure and single factor of all sums,—  
 Solve them to unity.

Democritus

Scooped handfuls out of stones and like the sea  
 Let earth run through his fingers. Well, he too,  
 He can achieve obliquity and learn  
 The cold distortion of the winter's sun  
 That breaks the surfaces of summer.

*Einstein on  
 the terrace  
 of The  
 Acacias  
 forces the  
 secret door*

Stands

Facing the world upon a windy slope  
 And with his mind relaxes the stiff forms  
 Of all he sees so that the heavy hills  
 Impend like rushing water and the earth  
 Hangs on the steep and momentary crest  
 Of overflowing ruin.



Overflow!

Sweep over into movement and dissolve  
All differences in the indifferent flux!  
Crumble to eddyings of dust and drown  
In change the thing that changes!

There begins

A vague unquiet in the fallow ground,  
A seething in the grass, a bubbling swirl  
Over the surface of the fields that spreads  
Around him gathering until the green  
Boils and beneath the frothy loam the rocks  
Ferment and simmer and like thinning smoke  
The trees melt into nothing.

Still he stands

Watching the vortex widen and involve  
In swirling dissolution the whole earth  
And circle through the skies till swaying time  
Collapses crumpling into dark the stars  
And motion ceases and the sifting world  
Opens beneath.

When he shall feel infuse  
His flesh with the rent body of all else  
And spin within his opening brain the motes  
Of suns and worlds and spaces.

*Einstein  
enters*

Like a foam

His flesh is withered and his shrivelling  
And ashy bones are scattered on the dark.  
But still the dark denies him. Still withstands  
The dust his penetration and flings back  
Himself to answer him.

Which seems to keep  
Something inviolate. A living something.

*You, Andrew Marvell*

AND here face down beneath the sun,  
And here upon earth's noonward height,

To feel the always coming on,  
The always rising of the night.

To feel creep up the curving east  
The earthly chill of dusk and slow  
Upon those under lands the vast  
And ever-climbing shadow grow,

31-2

And strange at Ecbatan the trees  
Take leaf by leaf the evening, strange,  
The flooding dark about their knees,  
The mountains over Persia change,

And now at Kermanshah the gate,  
Dark, empty, and the withered grass,  
And through the twilight now the late  
Few travellers in the westward pass.

And Baghdad darken and the bridge  
Across the silent river gone,  
And through Arabia the edge  
Of evening widen and steal on,

And deepen on Palmyra's street  
The wheel rut in the ruined stone,  
And Lebanon fade out and Crete  
High through the clouds and overblown,

And over Sicily the air  
Still flashing with the landward gulls,  
And loom and slowly disappear  
The sails above the shadowy hulls,

And Spain go under and the shore  
Of Africa, the gilded sand,  
And evening vanish and no more  
The low pale light across that land,

Nor now the long light on the sea—

And here face downward in the sun  
To feel how swift, how secretly,  
The shadow of the night comes on. . . .

*Memorial Rain*

AMBASSADOR PUSER the ambassador  
Reminds himself in French, felicitous tongue,  
What these (young men no longer) lie here for  
In rows that once, and somewhere else, were young—

All night in Brussels the wind had tugged at my door:  
I had heard the wind at my door and the trees strung  
Taut, and to me who had never been before  
In that country it was a strange wind blowing  
Steadily, stiffening the walls, the floor,  
The roof of my room. I had not slept for knowing  
He too, dead, was a stranger in that land  
And felt beneath the earth in the wind's flowing  
A tightening of roots and would not understand,  
Remembering lake winds in Illinois,  
That strange wind. I had felt his bones in the sand  
Listening.

—Reflects that these enjoy  
Their country's gratitude, that deep repose,  
That peace no pain can break, no hurt destroy,  
That rest, that sleep—

At Ghent the wind rose.  
There was a smell of rain and a heavy drag  
Of wind in the hedges but not as the wind blows  
Over fresh water when the waves lag  
Foaming and the willows huddle and it will rain:  
I felt him waiting.

—Indicates the flag  
Which (may he say) enisles in Flanders' plain  
This little field these happy, happy dead  
Have made America—

In the ripe grain  
The wind coiled glistening, darted, fled,  
Dragging its heavy body: at Waereghem

The wind coiled in the grass above his head:  
Waiting—listening—

—Dedicates to them  
This earth their bones have hallowed, this last gift  
A grateful country—

Under the dry grass stem  
The words are blurred, are thickened, the words sift  
Confused by the rasp of the wind, by the thin grating  
Of ants under the grass, the minute shift  
And tumble of dusty sand separating  
From dusty sand. The roots of the grass strain,  
Tighten, the earth is rigid, waits—he is waiting—

And suddenly, and all at once, the rain!

The people scatter, they run into houses, the wind  
Is trampled under the rain, shakes free, is again  
Trampled. The rain gathers, running in thinned  
Spurts of water that ravel in the dry sand  
Seeping into the sand under the grass roots, seeping  
Between cracked boards to the bones of a clenched hand:  
The earth relaxes, loosens; he is sleeping,  
He rests, he is quiet, he sleeps in a strange land.

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MARK VAN DOREN

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*Axle Song*

THAT anything should be—  
Place, time, earth, error—  
And a round eye in man to see:  
That was the terror.

And a true mind to try  
Cube, sphere, deep, short, and long—  
That was the burden of the sky's  
Hoarse axle song.

Improbable the stoat—  
The mouse, toad, worm, wolf, tiger;  
Unthinkable the stallion's trot,  
Behemoth's swagger.

Unspeakable; yet worse—  
Name, look, feel, memory, and number:  
Man there with his perverse  
Power not to slumber.

Let things created sleep—  
Rock, beast, rain, sand, and sliding river.  
So growled the earth's revolving heap;  
And will forever.

### *No Faith*

WHAT held the bones together? Not belief,  
Not anything he could probe, no ligament god.  
Why was the world so one for him yet many,  
So woman and yet so speechless? Then the odd,  
The furtive, ashamed security. We wondered.  
But there was no faith in him that sang or thundered.

There was no understanding in this man  
Of his own simplest secret: of the way  
Earth's air kept warm for him, and how there shone  
Always another light outdoors of day.  
He would have chosen darkness; he denied  
What was so strange, so palpable, inside;

He said he could be unhappy. But we knew.  
There was this sweet continuum, this flesh;

There were these bones, articulated so—  
A web they were, with music up the mesh,  
A frame of hidden wires too deep for tone,  
A skeleton wholeness, humming up to him alone.

He must have heard the harmony, but he swore  
Time talked to him in separated sounds.  
He took them as they came and loved them singly—  
Each one, he parried, perfect within its bounds.  
As for the burden's end, the tune's direction—  
He smiled; he was content with disconnection.

Yet who could smile and mean it? Who could rest,  
As this man did, midway the million things?  
Who else could be serene at truth's circumference  
When only the known center of it sings?  
Who else but he?—submissive to each part  
Till it became the all, the homeless heart.

### *The Whisperer*

BE extra careful by this door,  
No least, least sound, she said.  
It is my brother Oliver's,  
And he would strike you dead.

Come on. It is the top step now,  
And carpet all the way.  
But wide enough for only one,  
Unless you carry me.

I love your face as hot as this.  
Put me down, though, and creep.  
My father! He would strangle you,  
I think, like any sheep.

Now take me up again, again;  
 We're at the landing post.  
 You hear her saying Hush, and Hush?  
 It is my mother's ghost.

She would have loved you, loving me.  
 She had a voice as fine—  
 I love you more for such a kiss,  
 And here is mine; is mine.

And one for her—Oh, quick, the door!  
 I cannot bear it so.  
 The vestibule, and out; for now  
 Who passes that would know?

Here we could stand all night and let  
 Strange people smile and stare.  
 But you must go, and I must lie  
 Alone up there, up there.

Remember? But I understand.  
 More with a kiss is said.  
 And do not mind it if I cry,  
 Passing my mother's bed.

### *His Trees*

ONLY when he was old enough, and silent:  
 Not breaking-old; time-coated; that was it;  
 Only when he was dry enough: but seasoned;  
 Time-guarded against all weather-warp and split;  
 Time-roughened, with years of ridges down his bark:  
 Then only grew he worthy of their remark.

They did not move; but watched him as he came,  
 Man-tired, and paused and peered among their shade.  
 No magical advancing; each emerged  
 Only as slow acquaintance thus was made:

The oaks and he confronted, that was all;  
Save that his leaves of ignorance could fall.

They fell, and filled the temperate aging air  
With a crisp rustle, flake on flake descending;  
Till in some month it ceased, and trunk on trunk  
Acknowledged him, in rows without an ending.  
The lesser with the greater shadows wove:  
He there with them, companions of the grove.

The ash was proud to show him in its side  
How narrowly and coldly time had cut:  
A flank of iron; and how its sharpened leaves  
Stood out too stiff for any wind to shut:  
Stubborn; yet some antiquity of grace  
Still kept it king, still proved the priestly face.

That maple there, the old man of the wood:  
Shaggy, with clefts of shadow in its rind;  
Like a deep-bearded deity, becloaked,  
Shed down upon him, slowly, what of its mind  
Went floating: lightly, lightly; though of late  
Time pressed it under centuries of weight.

He touched them all, and moved among their shapes  
Like a blind child whom giants might despise.  
Yet he was their true copy; so they leaned,  
Indulgent to his autumn; met his eyes;  
And uttered as much, responding to his hands,  
As ever a second childhood understands.



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E. E. CUMMINGS

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*My Father Moved Through Dooms of Love*

MY father moved through dooms of love  
through sames of am through haves of give,  
singing each morning out of each night  
my father moved through depths of height

this motionless forgetful where  
turned at his glance to shining here;  
that if (so timid air is firm)  
under his eyes would stir and squirm

newly as from unburied which  
floats the first who, his april touch  
drove sleeping selves to swarm their fates  
woke dreamers to their ghostly roots

and should some why completely weep  
my father's fingers brought her sleep:  
vainly no smallest voice might cry  
for he could feel the mountains grow.

Lifting the valleys of the sea  
my father moved through griefs of joy;  
praising a forehead called the moon  
singing desire into begin

joy was his song and joy so pure  
a heart of star by him could steer  
and pure so now and now so yes  
the wrists of twilight would rejoice

keen as midsummer's keen beyond  
conceiving mind of sun will stand,  
so strictly (over utmost him  
so hugely) stood my father's dream

his flesh was flesh his blood was blood:  
no hungry man but wished him food;  
no cripple wouldn't creep one mile  
uphill to only see him smile.

Scorning the pomp of must and shall  
my father moved through dooms of feel;  
his anger was as right as rain  
his pity was as green as grain

septembering arms of year extend  
less humbly wealth to foe and friend  
then he to foolish and to wise  
offered immeasurable is

proudly and (by octobering flame  
beckoned) as earth will downward climb,  
so naked for immortal work  
his shoulders marched against the dark

his sorrow was as true as bread:  
no liar looked him in the head;  
if every friend became his foe  
he'd laugh and build a world with snow.

My father moved through theys of we,  
singing each new leaf out of each tree  
(and every child was sure that spring  
danced when she heard my father sing)

then let men kill which cannot share,  
let blood and flesh be mud and mire,  
scheming imagine, passion willed,  
freedom a drug that's bought and sold

giving to steal and cruel kind,  
a heart to fear, to doubt a mind,  
to differ a disease of same,  
conform the pinnacle of am

though dull were all we taste as bright,  
bitter all utterly things sweet,  
maggoty minus and dumb death  
all we inherit, all bequeath

and nothing quite so least as truth  
—i say though hate were why men breathe—  
because my father lived his soul  
love is the whole and more than all

### *Anyone Lived in a Pretty How Town*

ANYONE lived in a pretty how town  
(with up so floating many bells down)  
spring summer autumn winter  
he sang his didn't he danced his did.

Women and men (both little and small)  
cared for anyone not at all  
they sowed their isn't they reaped their same  
sun moon stars rain

children guessed (but only a few  
and down they forgot as up they grew  
autumn winter spring summer)  
that noone loved him more by more

when by now and tree by leaf  
she laughed his joy she cried his grief  
bird by snow and stir by still  
anyone's any was all to her

someones married their everyones  
laughed their cryings and did their dance  
(sleep wake hope and then) they  
said their nevers they slept their dream

stars rain sun moon  
(and only the snow can begin to explain  
how children are apt to forget to remember  
with up so floating many bells down)

one day anyone died i guess  
(and noone stooped to kiss his face)  
busy folk buried them side by side  
little by little and was by was

all by all and deep by deep  
and more by more they dream their sleep  
noone and anyone earth by april  
wish by spirit and if by yes.

Women and men (both dong and ding)  
summer autumn winter spring  
reaped their sowing and went their came  
sun moon stars rain

### *As Freedom Is a Breakfastfood*

AS freedom is a breakfastfood  
or truth can live with right and wrong  
or molehills are from mountains made  
—long enough and just so long  
will being pay the rent of seem  
and genius please the talentgang  
and water most encourage flame

as hatracks into peachtrees grow  
or hopes dance best on bald men's hair

and every finger is a toe  
and any courage is a fear  
—long enough and just so long  
will the impure think all things pure  
and hornets wail by children stung

or as the seeing are the blind  
and robins never welcome spring  
nor flatfolk prove their world is round  
nor dingsters die at break of dong  
and common's rare and millstones float  
—long enough and just so long  
tomorrow will not be too late

worms are the words but joy's the voice  
down shall go which and up come who  
breasts will be breasts thighs will be thighs  
deeds cannot dream what dreams can do  
—time is a tree (this life one leaf)  
but love is the sky and i am for you  
just so long and long enough

### *Always Before Your Voice My Soul*

ALWAYS before your voice my soul  
half-beautiful and wholly droll  
is as some smooth and awkward foal,  
whereof young moons begin  
the newness of his skin,

so of my stupid sincere youth  
the exquisite failure uncouth  
discovers a trembling and smooth  
Unstrength, against the strong  
silences of your song;

or as a single lamb whose sheen  
of full unsheared fleece is mean

beside its lovelier friends, between  
your thoughts more white than wool  
My thought is sorrowful:

but my heart smote in trembling thirds  
of anguish quivers to your words,  
As to a flight of thirty birds  
shakes with a thickening fright  
the sudden fooled light.

it is the autumn of a year:  
When through the thin air stooped with fear,  
across the harvest whitely peer  
empty of surprise  
death's faultless eyes

(whose hand my folded soul shall know  
while on faint hills do frailly go  
The peaceful terrors of the snow,  
and before your dead face  
which sleeps, a dream shall pass)

and these my days their sounds and flowers  
Fall in a pride of petaled hours,  
like flowers at the feet of mowers  
whose bodies strong with love  
through meadows hugely move.

yet what am i that such and such  
mysteries very simply touch  
me, whose heart-wholeness overmuch  
Expects of your hair pale,  
a terror musical?

while in an earthless hour my fond  
soul seriously yearns beyond  
this fern of sunset frond on frond  
opening in a rare  
slowness of gloried air . . .

The flute of morning stilled in noon—  
noon the implacable bassoon—  
now Twilight seeks the thrill of moon,  
washed with a wild and thin  
despair of violin

*Somewhere I Have Never Travelled,  
Gladly Beyond*

SOMEWHERE i have never travelled, gladly beyond  
any experience, your eyes have their silence:  
in your most frail gesture are things which enclose me,  
or which i cannot touch because they are too near

your slightest look easily will unclothe me  
though i have closed myself as fingers,  
you open always petal by petal myself as Spring opens  
(touching skilfully, mysteriously) her first rose

or if your wish be to close me, i and  
my life will shut very beautifully, suddenly,  
as when the heart of this flower imagines  
the snow carefully everywhere descending;

nothing which we are to perceive in this world equals  
the power of your intense fragility: whose texture  
compels me with the colour of its countries,  
rendering death and forever with each breathing

(i do not know what it is about you that closes  
and opens; only something in me understands  
the voice of your eyes is deeper than all roses)  
nobody, not even the rain, has such small hands

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H. PHELPS PUTNAM

---

*Hasbrouck and the Rose*

HASBROUCK was there and so were Bill  
And Smollet Smith the poet, and Ames was there.  
After his thirteenth drink, the burning Smith,  
Raising his fourteenth trembling in the air,  
Said, "Drink with me, Bill, drink up to the Rose."  
But Hasbrouck laughed like old men in a myth,  
Inquiring, "Smollet, are you drunk? What rose?"  
And Smollet said, "I drunk? It may be so;  
Which comes from brooding on the flower, the flower  
I mean toward which mad hour by hour  
I travel brokenly; and I shall know,  
With Hermes and the alchemists—but, hell,  
What use is it talking that way to you?  
Hard-boiled, unbroken egg, what can you care  
For the enfolded passion of the Rose?"  
Then Hasbrouck's voice rang like an icy bell:

"Arcane romantic flower, meaning what?  
Do you know what it meant? Do I?  
We do not know.  
Unfolding pungent rose, the glowing bath  
Of ecstasy and clear forgetfulness;  
Closing and secret bud one might achieve  
By long debauchery—  
Except that I have eaten it, and so  
There is no call for further lunacy.  
In Springfield, Massachusetts, I devoured  
The mystic, the improbable, the Rose.  
For two nights and a day, rose and rosette,  
And petal after petal and the heart,  
I had my banquet by the beams



Of four electric stars which shone  
Weakly into my room, for there,  
Drowning their light and gleaming at my side,  
Was the incarnate star  
Whose body bore the stigma of the Rose.  
And that is all I know about the flower;  
I have eaten it—it has disappeared.  
There is no Rose."

Young Smollet Smith let fall his glass; he said  
"Oh Jesus, Hasbrouck, am I drunk or dead?"

### *Hymn to Chance*

HOW shall we summon you?  
The tiny names of gods will not serve us now,  
Nor the magic names of the various sons of gods,  
Nor the names of their mothers murmured tenderly,  
Nor the masks of creatures which you have assumed.  
Gray hands enfolding all our lives,  
Gray hands, caress the stumbling of our tongues.

Lord Gardener, you have made our lives arise,  
Thin shoots of green articulated bone,  
Growing and bending and falling under your breath.  
You have grafted on these stems our nervy flesh  
Enriched with blood and our slow-blooming brains;  
You have made our fingers wise with restlessness.  
You have laid the earth out and the sea and the lower skies,  
You have set us on loose feet beside the earth  
That your many colored garden may run wild.  
And now from these garnished jaws your garden sings,  
Lord Chance,  
And your flowers coruscate with blossoming.

Ye are munificent, how shall we count your gifts?  
We enumerate like groping babyhood,

For our thoughts are bound and packaged in your hands,  
The world is formed and furled in your ceaseless hands,  
The hours and days drip from your fingertips,  
The ages and our lives fall clustering  
And the seasons fall unjustly from your hands.

Lord Prince of Hell, you have given us thought, the worm  
Which coils insistently through our too sensate dust.  
It is this disease, Lord Death, which corrupts us all,  
For we lie to animate our meagreness,  
To make us to ourselves less mean  
And our companions less like mangled fools.

Lord Costumer, the cabinets of our blood  
Have been hung with robes to clothe our nakedness;  
You have given us the burning skin of joy,  
You have turned our feet from circling slavery  
With the brilliance of a dollar thrown in the air.  
You have given the close bitter gown of grief,  
The acid lining of our joyousness.  
You have given us spirit, Lord, we are not abashed,  
And we have known quietude when our muscles moved  
Smoothly in laboring or in love  
And our nerves made harmony of their clamoring.  
We have raised ourselves immense memorials,  
And our laughter, like your own, has lapped the world.

You have given us the variable one, the infinite and the small,  
Which we have repaid with stiff ingratitude.  
We have insulted you as Lady Luck;  
We have made our lives a foolishness  
Because your eyes were neither cool nor kind.  
We are the victims of unfounded lust,  
We have discovered laws, forgive us, Lord;  
Forgive us, Lord, we are neither fine nor swift,  
We have not known our proper elegance.  
We have said tomorrow comes and the twinkling sun  
Will not refuse to flatter us with heat;  
We have hid ourselves in minuscules of time.

We have made ourselves low beds in an empty room;  
But our beds drift in the dark and our lies dissolve  
And there is your face shimmering and your hands  
Weaving the chaos where we come and go.

Grand Anarch, there is disrepute for us,  
But our words are not disreputable nor mean;  
We have spoken for ourselves and our dignity,  
Tearing our cheapness from us for a while.  
At this moment now, conceive us once again  
More suitable to the curving of your hands;  
Make us tough and mystical,  
Give us such eyes as will penetrate your eyes  
And lungs to draw the breath you give to us.  
Hear us for we do not beg;  
We only pray you heal our idiot ways  
And the kind of lonely madness which we have  
Of bleeding one another on the road.  
We travel in the belly of the wind;  
It is you, Lord, who will make us lame or swift.

### *About Women*

FAIR golden thoughts and lovely words—  
Away, away from her they call,  
For women are the silly birds,  
And perching on a sunny wall  
They chirp the answer and the all;  
They hold for true all futile things—  
Life, death, and even love—they fall  
To dreaming over jeweled rings.

Their bodies are uncouthly made,  
And heavy swollen like a pear,  
And yet their conquered, undismayed  
And childish lovers call them fair.  
Their honor fills them full of care,  
Their honor that is nothingness,

The mystery of empty air,  
The veil of vain delightfulness.

Their subtleties are thin and pale,  
Their hearts betray them in their eyes:  
They are a simple flute, and frail,  
With triple stops for playing lies.  
These poor machines of life are wise  
To scorn the metaphysic glow,  
The careless game that laughs and dies,  
The heady grace they cannot know.

Well, give them kisses, scatter flowers,  
And whisper that you cannot stay;  
We shall have clarity and hours  
Which women shall not take away.

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ROBERT HILLYER

---

*Letter to a Teacher of English*

JAMES B. MUNN

YOUR learning, James, in classics and romance,  
Sits lightlier than most men's ignorance;  
But often do I see in our profession  
Learning a mere extraneous possession,  
An undigested mass of dates and sources  
Roll'd round in academe's diurnal courses,  
Where scholars prepare scholars, not for life,  
But gaudy footnotes and a threadbare wife,—  
Keen eyes for errors in a worthless text,  
But none at all for this world or the next.

Your modesty, that even tops your learning,  
Forbids what I would say of you, so turning  
Not, as I hope, from Ghibelline to Guelph,  
I will discuss, as is the vogue, myself.

I fall between two stools—I can't say Chairs—  
A bard too learn'd, a scholar in arrears.  
The critical reviewers, week by week,  
Damn poets who command their own technique.  
Professor is a title that to them  
Begins in laughter and concludes in phlegm.  
A careful rhyme, a spondee nobly planned  
Is academic, and the work unmanned.  
Would that these critics lived in houses fashioned  
By carpenters congenially impassioned.  
I'd love to see the roof-tree fall on . . . no,  
The name is Legion; let us leave it so.  
But as a teacher I have equal luck,—  
In ponds a chicken and on shore a duck.  
My wretched memory, for all my pains,  
Drops tons for every ounce that it retains;  
Far wiser now, I have less factual knowledge  
At forty-one than when I was in college. . . .

Yet there is recompense for knowing well  
One language, if it be incomparable.  
Disdainful, the Athenian would speak  
No other language than his native Greek.  
Now his provincial literature is prized  
In every barbarous tongue that he despised.  
The learned Roman, who knew Greek by heart,  
Had twice the scholarship, and half the art.  
The great Elizabethans' education  
Thrived less on lore than on superb translation.  
Our scholars, to whom every root is known,  
Command all languages, except their own.  
For confirmation, but consult the theses  
That year by year bankrupt the college presses.

When poets go, grammarians arrive.  
Is Virgil dead? Let commentators thrive.  
The gift of tongues without the Holy Ghost  
Becomes a Babel, not a Pentecost.  
In short, dear James, by now you plainly see  
I find no virtue in philology;  
At best a sterile hobby, often worse,  
The plumes, when language dies, upon its hearse. . . .

Now, James, I stop complaining, I will plan  
An education to produce a man.  
Make no mistake, I do not want this done,—  
My limitations are the cornerstone.  
Plato's *Republic* may have served some use  
In manuscript, but not in Syracuse,  
So let my dream Academy remain  
A dream;—I'm sure I do not ask in vain.  
First would I have my scholar learn the tongue  
He never learned to speak when he was young;  
Then would I have him read therein, but merely  
In the great books, to understand them clearly.  
O that our living literature could be  
Our sustenance, not archæology!  
Time is the wisest judge, who folds away  
The surplus of a too-abundant day.  
My scholar shall be brilliantly forbidden  
To dig old garbage from a kitchen midden.  
Far better Alexandria in flames  
Than buried beneath unimportant names,  
And even Sappho, glory that was Greece's,  
Lives best, I blasphemously think, in pieces.  
Surely our sprite, who over Amherst hovered,  
Would gain if no more poems were discovered.  
That Chinese emperor who burned the books  
Succumbed to madness shrewder than it looks;  
The minor poets and the minor sages  
Went up in smoke; the great shine down the ages.  
The Harvard Library's ungainly porch  
Has often made me hunger for a torch,

But this not more to simplify a lecture  
Than to appease the Muse of architecture.

When music and sweet poetry agree,  
Who would be thinking of a Ph.D.?  
O who would Ablauts bear, when Brahms's First  
Is soon to be performed or but rehearsed?  
My scholar must have music in his heart,  
Bach and Beethoven, Schumann and Mozart,  
Franck and Sibelius, and more like these,  
Their works, if not their names, sweet symphonies.  
Ah, James, I missed my calling; I would turn  
To that one art toward which the others yearn,—  
But I observe my neighbor's cow, who leaves  
Her fertile pasture for my barren sheaves.  
The field next door, the next-door art, will thus  
Always attract the mildly covetous.  
Yet some day I will play you the main theme  
Of the immortal counterpoint I dream:  
Clear melody in fugue and canon rises  
On strings, with many structural surprises.  
No letter, but a prelude, for your sake  
I would compose beside this tranquil lake.  
Its line should rise toward heaven until it broke  
Halfway between the sky and the great oak;  
Then waver, like a flock of homing birds,  
In slow descending flights of minor thirds.  
Music alone can set the spirit free  
From the dark past and darker things to be.  
Could Man be judged by music, then the Lord  
Would quench the angel of the flaming sword.  
Alas, the final tones so soon disperse  
Their echoes through the empty universe,  
And hearers, weak from following Beethoven,  
Relax with Gershwin, Herbert, and de Koven.

But to return to Polyhymnia,  
And incidentally to my student. Ah,  
Where is the creature? No, but is that he?  
A saxophone is nuzzling on his knee!

His eyes pop out, his bellied cheeks expand,  
His foot taps 'Alexander's Ragtime Band.'  
Ungraceful and unpardonable wretch!  
Was it for you my eager pen would sketch  
A new, a sensible curriculum?  
Burst with your Panpipes! and we'll both be dumb.  
I was about to urge philosophy,  
Especially the Greek, I was to be  
Your godfather in recommending Faith  
To you, fit godson for a Sigmund Spaeth!  
Of history and time I was to tell,  
Things visible and things invisible,  
But what to you are echoes from Nicea,  
Who never prayed nor cherished an idea?  
And what have you to gain from education,  
Blown bellows for unceasing syncopation?  
Learning and life are too far wrenched apart,  
I cannot reconcile, for all my art,  
Studies that go one way and life another,  
Tastes that demoralize, and tests that smother.

James, what is this I find? an angry scowl  
Sits on my brow like a Palladian owl!  
Let me erase it, lest it should transform  
The soft horizon with a thunderstorm.  
I would you were beside me now, to share  
The sound of falling water, the sweet air.  
Under the yew a vacant easy chair  
Awaits your coming; and long-planted seeds  
Begin to bloom amid the encircling weeds.  
I bade my student an abrupt adieu  
But find it harder to take leave of you.  
May we not some day have a mild carouse  
In Pontefract instead of Warren House?  
The distance nothing,—in two hours' time  
Another land where that word's but a rhyme.  
Would I were Marvell, then you could not harden  
Your heart against a visit to my garden.  
I'd write those happy lines about the green



Annihilation, and you'd soon be seen  
 Hatless and coatless, bootless,—well, my soul!  
 He's in the lake with nothing on at all!  
 To sink, to swim, that is the only question:  
 Thus ends my treatise on—was it digestion?  
 Farewell, and yours sincerely, and yours ever,  
 The time has come for the initial shiver.  
 When into lakes, as into life, we dive,  
 We're fortunate if we come up alive.

---

LEE ANDERSON

---

*prevailing winds*

I      The bland many-eyed walls  
              of skyscrapers and the modest  
                          in-between brownstone houses  
 shall not bruise the thrust of his rapier spirit  
 rather the artist with the intensity of youth  
              the prophet's second sight    the seer's vision  
              shall cause these buildings to shrink and dilate  
              lean askew into the ether    relax like wilted rubber  
                          stand and shine  
 as the lucent image of an all-seeing    god within him

but never shall suave façade    of church and store  
                          ever divert an eye attending  
                          every minute of every waking day  
 the amazing palette span  
              of dioramic grey  
 running the scale from brilliant sweep of cornice line  
 to leaden asphalt Avenue from arrowhead    oyster shell  
                          cat's eye grey of metal chrome

to warm maternal monotone in archaic gothic cathedral

grey is the dominant the dream tone  
of the city of the artist  
the way these chords and phrases  
of shade and light blend and repeat  
soothes and fires like music  
like music swelling falling  
the grey of a sailing barge and a gull's wing  
of early pewter and newly minted silver  
the grey that sounds like a loon's call  
the ring of thin glass  
and a smothered laugh in summer rain

grey is the dominant the dream tone  
of the urge towards wisdom love and order  
but under city clouds  
design slides easily as if  
what matter if old order hold  
the mood forever

one alone moves sorrowfully along  
the early twilight sleet and snow aware of confusion  
numbing December cold insolence and hate  
on high and the answer only the artist  
can encompass and only  
while wedged  
like a plume bright flare  
in the spiral shaped hour of making

the bland bonafide letter-perfect literal mind  
and ample counterpart  
on the cat-lipped distaff side  
never divert an ounce of vigor  
from getting and spending or the lending  
of an eye an ear a hand  
to grow beneath obedient kindred sense  
responsive to the last nuance of tone  
and color in tolling bells the blending

## AMERICAN POETRY

organ notes of grey in building stone  
 the changing mood and tense of the city  
 from hour to hour and day to day  
*they* who out of step out of rhythm  
 react in kind with conveyor belt mind

*they* shall not snare the sculptor  
 in the plush thrall of the Avenue  
 for he is ruled by the systole diastole  
 undulating auguries of seven moon moved oceans  
 rather shall his hand cause arrogant square walls  
 to warp in the wind to curl and buckle  
 under furious thrust

under urgent upward fluent current  
 until the plume-bright spiral flare of the sea  
 rockets to a heaven of renewal remaking

every minute of every living day  
 touch may be talisman to a thousand worlds  
 beyond caprice of eye forever seeing earth  
 within the compass of horizon blue  
 for a hand may reach where eye is blind and know  
 as the sculptor knows the planes and lines beneath  
 the oblong marble block  
 the fourth dimension man  
 contained in three dimension stone

*oh* for a phantom hand at least as wide  
 as the spread of a city street a hand to trace  
 the Quaker grey cool clay model feel  
 of great grey monoliths of stainless steel  
 a hand to hold the smooth the rough  
 the length breadth thickness mass  
 and weight  
 . . . to know the tremor of wind stressed tower  
 on slow appraising thumb  
*oh* for a mammoth hand  
 to mould cube and dome and octagon edge  
 into shapes and planes where light can play

on narrow street and hidden alley way  
... for a hand to raise to half again  
the stature of man in the image of master

but under the clouds of the city between rivers  
spirit sinks fruitless barren sapless  
from head to heart to hip to heel  
soaking like rain on drought pocked  
ground  
into glinting piebald paving stone into  
the metallic granite rock on which the city rides

*above income sluiced to fumed altar oak*  
*above sweating damp and nausea*  
*blocked in deference to others*  
*in sea swaying homeward bus*  
*the only important are*  
the intemperate dream to evening fervent  
the continuing beat of andante cantabile  
echoing through all of a fruitless follow-  
ing day

while Siphon Sahib is still astride the Veblen  
thunder

search for immaculate finds rule of thumb  
*languid arm aptly draped on parlance*  
groping for homily when cornered  
unconscious of undercurrent urge  
gripping like fire an inner silence  
the knowing old order holds defenceless realm

the bland parvenu  
the wool and a yard wide dowager  
of lean temple and February countenance  
these shall not spit and snarl at the dancer  
rather she with a sybil's gift of divination  
foresees an Avenue empty  
of preening idle women for the dancer

shall cause this vapid furtive circumstance  
 of burnished leather luggage models of ships  
     mandarin lacquer for finger tips  
 of diamonds rubies perfumes furs and  
     flowers  
 and trinkets in trade for idle hours shall cause  
     the storms once wracking Lesbos  
 to shake the even tenor of tall grey buildings  
 like plucked bass viol strings like maddened tim-  
     pani

horn and drum reeling in unison  
     with her every motion  
*it is as if she were afloat* as if  
 she knew the quick surprise the arrow shock  
     of mountain lake in midnight moonlit May  
 the deeper warmer offshore current  
     tingling against her naked skin  
     in darkened ecstasy  
 around and about a closely anchored pier

oh for a hand high over roof and spire  
 to cup the flint spark stab from sidewalk  
     crowds  
 in endless ribbon strands  
     —unmarked notes above the treble C  
         of carillon evensong,  
 below basso profundo resonant G  
 of an ocean slugging the sand bar line  
     where city ends and sea begins

grey is the dominant the dream tone  
 of the rhythms of the city panelled shadow grey  
     in V-shaped diamond shafts of sun aslant  
 the bright dust laden air above the street  
     the grey of wire thin winter rain against  
     warm wool monotones of modest  
     in-between brownstone houses  
 . . . never shall suave façade  
     or letter-perfect literal

ever divert an eye attending  
the grey that sounds like a loon's call  
the ring of thin glass  
and a contralto laugh in summer rain

## II

over the hill's brow gazing south and east  
on the whole brewing land there is  
an aura of mystery like a moslem veil  
as air for mastery limes mystic soil

from early April when the scillas rise  
eerily in new apparel until the rose  
enthraling moods of nascent auguries  
ascend from vague wren trill to oriole aria

over the hill's brow the south wind blows  
a strand of hair from face and ear  
and with it dun brown furrows  
of thought-bent thin blown sorrow

—the teasing caressing southwind swirling  
around a smoothly skirted leg  
and wind-pink tingling cheek!  
how glad we are to share the earth  
with whip resilient reddening briar  
and yellow willow how good it is  
simply to be alive to see the last  
reluctant bank of shadowed snow  
give way to first green tuft of grass

to feel our throats repeat  
the quivering tremulous beat  
—April rides prevailing winds

under the full bright moon in May  
nothing sleeps nothing sleeps soundly . . .  
*from early April when the scillas rise  
one like her will step from rock to rose*

. . . under the full bright moon  
with the odor of lilac plum and cherry  
pervading all . . .

*as blossom after blossom succeeds surprise  
a breast offers bliss exceeding praise*

. . . like heady wine inhaled  
every heavy moon burdened flower  
becomes blood brother of spellbound beholder  
until cloud sweep and pulse flare  
sever bond neither could endure further . . .

*plum nut apple lilac cherry locust  
a plume night nipple full furry thou likest*

. . . the mirrored light of the delicate opal  
of apple petal on arm and shoulder  
firefly glowworm and throaty note  
of frog in eerie frenzy in the fragrant night . . .

*the moon caressing an elm firm thigh  
mons veneris laving in girdle free thought*

. . . all through the night the passion white night  
the pitch of life ascends higher and ever higher  
from bolero spin of katydid

to meadow wide woodwind symphony  
until a halo of light and the first bird call  
bind more closely a mating world  
with the sleepless lazy lid of hour after hour . . .

*priapus in armour resplendent knowing  
piety passes with the earth's renewing*

it is five o'clock in the morning  
in the merry month of May  
the catbird mocks the bluebird's song  
green grass hides bleak brown earth  
every bush and branch wears a glad rebirth  
and we sing we sing pollee wollee doodle  
cock a double duty the live long day

and we loaf on down a wooded lane  
for scent of grape our lungs too scant  
to grasp the breath of June  
we breathe-in hour-long draughts





"why must request for answer  
 remain forever unanswered" if you  
 far away are high on warm red wine  
 a dream astride the city wintered mind

*abracadabra a b c*  
*banish literal ale spill spell*  
*and wine spur lateral*

*her husband's to Asylum gone*  
*scotch and soda arm in arm*  
*she shall come to no great harm*  
*but I'll do and I'll do and I'll do*

great apple orchard ardors wax  
 as he in shorts and she in slacks  
 in ambient attitude appraise  
 alternate glare and shade of sun  
 their tunics both now quite undone  
 for pillowed travel o'er meadow maze  
 and mimic dalliance with dappled light  
 as though endless days were endless night

at zenith now in state  
 the pleasing stallion mane appears  
 "darling, I feel so guilty and ashamed"  
 "you needn't, you're not to be blamed"  
 "it isn't because we are as we are  
 but for those who are starved and stunned and bare"  
 "your woman's voice is full of woe and war"  
 "I cry beware beware"

*abracadabra*  
*ale spill spell*  
 literal is banished, "x - y - z - you?"  
 "nine by the clock and all is well"  
 "ten by my wrist and all too few"

when the harvest is in we drink and dance  
and whosoever fails by chance  
to celebrate without reason  
this brief inebriate too short season  
we "blast with the breath of December  
and freeze in tumult to lifeless ember"

blessings on you if in spite of literal  
you can and do assemble lateral

## IV

this limbic pink whorl of an ear  
assembles sound in double role  
the thunder and rumble of the sea is heard  
in duplicate ring as rambling ground swell  
the muted music of waves off shore at night  
and the lumbering roar of striking water  
a northeaster ramming wind and rain on rock

either it is the mood of the storm  
or eon-old instinct augurs the end  
of peace for only a month ago  
we dozed under hypnotic August sun  
now unprovoked attack insult and rabid threat  
leave hurricane and hysteria shaping every hour

here on this September beach with sting  
of salt spray smarting eyes facing hidden horizon  
we inquire  
when a bullet finds a mark what sound  
may lull the end what quirk of mind will soothe  
the quick stab and slow ebb of encumbered breath

remembering  
our humble and lowly origin who  
could not hear the runic beat of song in speech  
or listen to the first blind groping of life

as the race after cold brine breathes ungilled air  
answers a sun not glazed by mottled green  
but clear—a haven beyond the weaving land line  
the grey monotony of everlasting seas

*how can one condense as war nears  
to a month to a single day the unspent years?*

from break of day to next day's birth  
this star-shaped five pronged hand moulds earth  
into contours of exquisite places  
where five senses share with seven faces  
storm and calm and mirth

under the cool black autumn night  
with star shaped hand held pronged to light  
the ear cups sound from distant suns as stirring  
as tribal drums in dreaming as whirring  
mountain blues in southern flight

in women's arms new chords are heard  
echoing through breathless surds  
uncertainly in exquisite places:  
love like the track of light a star traces  
following an echoing word

early October rain then sun  
turning green to red is one  
when this change rings on bone and muscle  
blood hears the whisper and rustle  
of leaf from scarlet to dun

in October when the breath is held on half  
and quarter notes a large round pebbled hurt  
wells up from deep beneath the smooth thin plane  
whereon we skim like restless water skeet

over the spirit implacable fog  
drapes a melancholy shroud of beaded mist  
a damp that will not dry on neck or wrist

*the whole wide world now moves in fits and starts*  
in the middle of the night men writhe and  
twist  
and ask if voice of dissembler shall again become  
bayonet of disemboweller

brown hunters quarry a brown hare  
a double shot  
silhouettes a dubious quandary olive rookies  
march and countermarch from state to church  
corralled again within walled cities a man  
is flayed by scourging sound  
excruciating shrieks tear skin to shreds  
the arousers releasing snare and drum of hate and holy  
writ  
beginning like the shock of sand on tongue  
noise rebounds against nail-scoring stone  
strikes flagstaff and belfry  
endlessly echoes  
to stoved ankle scraped bone scoured knee  
so stripped slowly from instep to forelock  
he stands quivering a weapon weirdly forged

remember our humble aim  
for unspent time to seek for new horizons  
in pattern and rhythm  
the image of order in nature as in art  
to walk the avenue of unspent years  
by druid trees until the eye appears  
to know a hundred shades of green ranging  
from maple blue to locust yellow changing  
as the light changes as the wind veers

to hear in the dance when the moon is bright  
music and rhyme in marriage rite  
the sound of whirling flame as dancers  
like white moths seeking final answers  
wildly welcome night

and never to allow a fear of thirst  
 or hunger well rehearsed  
 to claim the month of May until dying  
 a hand waves like swallows flying  
 to say Spring always comes first

in laughter and ribald fun to affront  
 by gesture rude and word stone blunt  
 peruke and mask of those whose manner  
 proclaims they carry the banner  
 for bishops who would but can't  
 for prissy pretenders thou and thee churchers  
 cadging to powers that be pulling the oars  
 for plenary purses and both our ears as well

thus zippered into khaki by quaint technique  
 of circus stage fife and drum hurdy gurdy  
 and apt phrase of sovereign  
 he learns the rub of sanded olive drab  
 on salted welt

countermarching  
 from state to church from gyp  
 to honky-tonk priest to prostitute  
 his mind under skillfully tautened winch  
 and vise on skull toboggans to medieval hell

in febrile nightmare a gauleiter resumes  
 fantastic search for gold in perfect teeth  
 as heat of auger hollows faultless tooth  
 this pinioned head trembles and vibrates  
 in idiot palsied shaking until temple  
 spurts in throe and blood streams like tears  
 a tendon jerks the puppet knee to navel  
 heart and lungs are clutched in talon grip of hawk  
 hands once whole bend and twist iron chair arm  
 in jagged broken gripe until at end  
 of eternal second embedded nerve explodes—  
 bit rears eyeward to agony of more than mortal rue

when a bullet finds a mark what sounds  
may lull the end what quirk of mind will soothe

mind's eye views through snow and mist  
a dancer playing toe and wrist  
in rhythm with word spoken  
but with cadence and melody broken  
by a warm laugh kissed

and the queer discovery made  
when bud of lilac and apple played  
tuning fork notes on hand held to render  
to Spring the sign of surrender  
in blind man's bluff parade

since October the breath withheld to half  
and quarter note we watched the sober close  
of Fall

now with wet red mark on first snow  
we inquire what sounds are heard by those  
seated in concert chair in bland white tie  
and striped silk shorts

can the delicate shell of such  
an ear assemble sound in double role  
and catch the echo of andante largo  
against the thunder and rumble of guns?

only to advance beyond this halfway stage  
in time beyond the whoring hell  
of constant war of cleric and sovereign  
pimp and puppet moving in marionette obedience  
to lust so deeply buried under conscious mind  
they are unaware of how in turn they too  
are pulled by hidden strings

*"Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray the Lord . . ."*  
but GOD  
has become the recruit and partisan of death

HIS servant a horse-boned mental runt  
 whose flaccid jowl weaves in jellied accord  
 with barrel paunch is servile  
 stone blind a mumbling fool  
 a pacifist in time of peace  
 cadger to plenary power in war  
 a sniveller in prurience while a man dies . . .

*enough!* a waste to curse in the last hour  
 weak men well meaning and of vague good will

rather  
 remember our humble aim for unspent time  
                   out of a tempering of matter and spirit  
 to impress design upon a world  
                   careless of human wish where  
                   aside from the stars order exists  
 within the mind of man alone  
 rather in the discipline of rhythm and pattern  
 to find an arrowed answer to question still unread

how can one condense as death nears  
                   to a day or an hour the unlived years?  
                   how can sprung loin in arc tension speed  
 an image of heaven beyond the weaving land line  
 where against an amazing palette span  
 of dioramic grey in triumph and splendor  
                   men enter a city designed by the dreams of artists

how hear beyond the sand bar edge  
                   where city ends and sea begins  
 the muted music of waves off shore at night  
                   and as in a woman's arms  
 the quivering tremulous beat of speechless song  
                   soothing the quick stab  
                   the slow ebb of encumbered breath  
 until a halo of light beyond the hidden horizon  
                   severs bond neither could endure further

from under wet red mark on first snow  
in early April will the scillas rise  
to enthralling mood to "chorus for survival"  
the mystery of life within life without end

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EDMUND WILSON

---

*Riverton*

HERE am I among elms again—ah, look  
How, high above low windows hung with white,  
Dark on white dwellings, rooted among rock,  
They rise like iron ribs that pillar night!  
The stars are high again; the night is clear;  
The bed rolls with the old uneven floor;  
The air is still again—I lie and hear  
The river always falling at the door.

—O elms! O river! aid me at this turn—  
Their passing makes my late imperative:  
They flicker now who frightfully did burn,  
And I must tell their beauty while I live.  
Changing their grace as water in its flight,  
And gone like water; give me then the art,  
Firm as night-frozen ice found silver-bright,  
That holds the splendor though the days depart.

*A House of the Eighties*

NO more in dreams as once it draws me there,  
All fungus-grown and sunken in damp ground—  
No more as once when waking I gazed down  
On elms like water-weeds in moonlit air



Or heard the August downpour with its dull full sound—  
Drenched hedges and the hillside and the night,  
The largest house in sight—  
And thought it sunken out of time or drowned  
As hulks in Newark Bay are soaked and slowly drown.

—The ugly stained-glass window on the stair,  
Dark-panelled dining-room, the guinea fowl's fierce clack,  
The great gray cat that on the oven slept—  
My father's study with its books and birds,  
His scornful tone, his eighteenth-century words,  
His green door sealed with baize  
—Today I travel back  
To find again that one fixed point he kept  
And left me for the day  
In which this other world of theirs grows dank, decays,  
And founders and goes down.

### *The Voice*

#### *On a Friend in a Sanitarium*

ALL Virgil's idyls end in sunsets; pale  
With death, the past of Dante opens deep;  
The men of Shakespeare do not break, they fail;  
And Joyce's dreamers always drift asleep.

—Her loved American laughter, male and clear,  
That rang so young in London or in Rome—  
A quarter-century gone, my fortieth year—  
Is mute among those living ghosts at home.

And I who have been among them and who know  
The spirit shrunken to its shuttered cell,  
Now hear no laughter—only, piercing low,  
This voice that always says, "Farewell! sleep well!"

I heard it, dulled with love upon your breast,  
I heard it in our peace of summer suns;  
I heard it where the long waves of the West  
Retard the dark with loud suspended guns;

And even in the white bark of that wood,  
Those mountains roped and broken by our race,  
Beside those high streams where the horses stood  
And watched our strange and desperate embrace.

This blue world with its high wide sky of islands!  
Pale cliffs, white cubes, the slender point, the little bay—  
And over there, beyond the outer shore,  
Its wildness and its silence,  
Old kegs and beams of wrecks embedded in hot snows,  
Will sink in awful lavender and rose  
The red sea-faring sun—  
This freedom of the sands, and summer new begun!

—But oh, my dear, among those dunes we lay,  
And all the paths we left are drifted smooth  
And we shall make no more!—  
And death lies underneath  
That cuts the world away.

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LOUISE BOGAN

---

*Old Countryside*

B EYOND the hour we counted rain that fell  
On the slant shutter, all has come to proof.  
The summer thunder, like a wooden bell,  
Rang in the storm above the mansard roof,

And mirrors cast the cloudy day along  
The attic floor; wind made the clapboards creak.  
You braced against the wall to make it strong,  
A shell against your cheek.

Long since, we pulled brown oak-leaves to the ground  
In a winter of dry trees; we heard the cock  
Shout its unplaceable cry, the axe's sound  
Delay a moment after the axe's stroke.

Far back, we saw, in the stillest of the year,  
The scrawled vine shudder, and the rose-branch show  
Red to the thorns, and, sharp as sight can bear,  
The thin hound's body arched against the snow.

### *Summer Wish*

*That cry's from the first cuckoo of the year.  
I wished before it ceased.*

#### FIRST VOICE

We call up the green to hide us  
This hardened month, by no means the beginning  
Of the natural year, but of the shortened span  
Of leaves upon the earth. We call upon  
The weed as well as the flower: groundsel, stellaria.  
It is the month to make the summer wish;  
It is time to ask  
The wish from summer as always: *It will be,  
It will be.*

That tool we have used  
So that its haft is smooth; it knows the hand.  
Again we lift the wish to its expert uses,  
Tired of the bird that calls one long note downward,  
And the forest in cast-iron. No longer, no longer,  
The season of the lying equinox  
Wherein false cock-crow sounds!

## SECOND VOICE

In March the shadow  
Already falls with a look of summer, fuller  
Upon the snow, because the sun at last  
Is almost centered. Later, the sprung moss  
Is the tree's shadow; under the black spruces  
It lies where lately snow lay, bred green from the cold  
Cast down from melting branches.

## FIRST VOICE

A wish like a hundred others.  
You cannot, as once, yearn forward. The blood now never  
Stirs hot to memory, or to the fantasy  
Of love, with which, both early and late, one lies  
As with a lover.  
Now do you suddenly envy  
Poor praise you told long since to keep its tongue,  
Of pride's acquired accent,—pomposity, arrogance,  
That trip in their latinity? With these at heart  
You could make a wish, crammed with the nobility  
Of error. It would be no use. You cannot  
Take yourself in.

## SECOND VOICE

Count over what these days have: lilies  
Returned in little to an earth unready,  
To the sun not accountable;  
The hillside mazed and leafless, but through the ground  
The leaf from the bulb, the unencouraged green  
Heaving the metal earth, presage of thousand  
Shapes of young leaves—lanceolate, trefoil,  
Peach, willow, plum, the lilac like a heart.

## FIRST VOICE

Memory long since put by,—to what end the dream  
That drags back lived-out life with the wrong words,  
The substitute meaning?

Those that you once knew there play out false time,  
Elaborate yesterday's words, that they were deaf to,  
Being dead ten years.—Call back in anguish  
The anger in childhood that defiled the house  
In walls and timber with its violence?  
Now must you listen again  
To your own tears, shed as a child, hold the bruise  
With your hand, and weep, fallen against the wall,  
And beg, *Don't, don't*, while the pitiful rage goes on  
That cannot stem itself?  
Or, having come into woman's full estate,  
Enter the rich field, walk between the bitter  
Bowed grain, being compelled to serve,  
To heed unchecked in the heart the reckless fury  
That tears fresh day from day, destroys its traces,—  
Now bear the blow too young?

## SECOND VOICE

In early April  
At six o'clock the sun has not set; on the walls  
It shines with scant light, pale, dilute, misplaced,  
Light there's no use for. At overcast noon  
The sun comes out in a flash, and is taken  
Slowly back to the cloud.

## FIRST VOICE

Not memory, and not the renewed conjecture  
Of passion that opens the breast, the unguarded look  
Flaying clean the raped defence of the body,  
Breast, bowels, throat, now pulled to the use of the eyes  
That see and are taken. The body that works and sleeps,  
Made vulnerable, night and day, to delight that changes  
Upon the lips that taste it, to the lash of jealousy  
Struck on the face, so the betraying bed  
Is gashed clear, cold on the mind, together with  
Every embrace that agony dreads but sees  
Open as the love of dogs.

## SECOND VOICE

The cloud shadow flies up the bank, but does not  
Blow off like smoke. It stops at the bank's edge.  
In the field by trees two shadows come together.  
The trees and the cloud throw down their shadow upon  
The man who walks there. Dark flows up from his feet  
To his shoulders and throat, then has his face in its mask,  
Then lifts.

## FIRST VOICE

Will you turn to yourself, proud breast,  
Sink to yourself, to an ingrained, pitiless  
Rejection of voice and touch not your own, press sight  
Into a myth no eye can take the gist of;  
Clot up the bone of phrase with the black conflict  
That claws it back from sense?

Go into the breast . . .

You have traced that lie, before this, out to its end,  
Heard bright wit headstrong in the beautiful voice  
Changed to a word mumbled across the shoulder  
To one not there; the gentle self split up  
Into a yelling fiend and a soft child.  
You have seen the ingrown look  
Come at last upon a vision too strong  
Ever to turn away.

The breast's six madresses repeat their dumb-show.

## SECOND VOICE

In the bright twilight children call out in the fields.  
The evening takes their cry. How late it is!  
Around old weeds worn thin and bleached to their pith  
The field has leaped to stalk and strawberry blossom.  
The orchard by the road  
Has the pear-tree full at once of flowers and leaves,  
The cherry with flowers only.

## FIRST VOICE

The mind for refuge, the grain of reason, the will,  
 Pulled by a wind it thinks to point and name?  
 Malicious symbol, key for rusty wards,  
 The crafty knight in the game, with its mixed move,  
 Prey to an end not evident to craft. . . .

## SECOND VOICE

Fields are ploughed inward  
 From edge to center; furrows squaring off  
 Make dark lines far out in irregular fields,  
 On hills that are builded like great clouds that over them  
 Rise, to depart.  
 Furrow within furrow, square within a square,  
 Draw to the center where the team turns last.  
 Horses in half-ploughed fields  
 Make earth they walk upon a changing color.

## FIRST VOICE

The year's begun; the share's again in the earth.

Speak out the wish like music, that has within it  
 The horn, the string, the drum pitched deep as grief.  
 Speak it like laughter, outward. O brave, O generous  
 Laughter that pours from the well of the body and draws  
 The bane that cheats the heart: aconite, nightshade,  
 Hellebore, hyssop, rue,—symbols and poisons  
 We drink, in fervor, thinking to gain thereby  
 Some difference, some distinction.  
 Speak it, as that man said, *as though the earth spoke*,  
 By the body of rock, shafts of heaved strata, separate,  
 Together.

Though it be but for sleep at night,  
 Speak out the wish.  
 The vine we pitied is in leaf; the wild  
 Honeysuckle blows by the granite.

## SECOND VOICE

See now

Open above the field, stilled in wing-stiffened flight,  
The stretched hawk fly.

---

HORACE GREGORY

---

*Fortune for Mirabel*

TELL, tell our fortune, Mirabel,  
Shuffle the pack and cut  
Cards spread face upward on the carpet  
Over the faded green sweet and violet pastures:  
The hour-glass, time, the blonde girl and brunette.  
Give us good cards tonight: the faces  
Beautiful and new—and love, Mirabel,  
The pink heart pierced and the great round yellow sun;  
We shall be rich tonight: laurels for fame,  
The gold-mine falling from your right hand,  
And O the lute and ribbons and the harp!

—Not the unopened letter nor the blind eye  
Nor the fire card bright as war flowing through Spain  
Nor the lightning card, troopship in storm  
Nor the quick arrow pointing nowhere to the sky.  
Not now tonight and not the spotted devil,  
The faithless dancing psychiatric patient,  
Who wept, always the lover, not the man,  
Sold the pawn ticket—not tonight, Mirabel,  
Not the deep cypress vista and the urn,  
The kidnapped ten-year-old, the head  
In pear tree branches and one delicate frosted hand  
On the back stair





They looked like power and fame,  
 like love, like everything you need;  
 and you would think their looks would put them where  
 they could dictate a letter or run a bank  
 or kiss a microphone or float a yacht or sleep in  
 a genuine imitation Marie Antoinette bed  
 or get somewhere before they die  
 instead of dropping into dreams too deep  
 to tell themselves who, what, or where they are  
 until a fire turns them out into the street  
 or a shot is heard and the police are at the door.

### *Chorus for Survival*

#### XIV

ASK no return for love that's given  
 embracing mistress, wife or friend,

ask no return:

on this deep earth or in pale heaven,  
 awake and spend  
 hands, lips, and eyes in love,  
 in darkness burn,

the limbs entwined until the soul ascend.

Ask no return of seasons gone:  
 the fire of autumn and the first hour of spring,  
 the short bough blossoming  
 through city windows when night's done,  
 when fears adjourn

backward in memory where all loves end

in self again, again the inward tree  
 growing against the heart  
 and no heart free.  
 From love that sleeps behind each eye  
 in double symmetry

ask no return,

even in enmity, look! I shall take your hand;  
nor can our limbs disjoin in separate ways again,  
walking, even at night on foreign land  
through houses open to the wind, through cold and rain,  
waking alive, meet, kiss and understand.

---

MALCOLM COWLEY

---

*Stone Horse Shoals*

“TO wade the sea-mist, then to wade the sea  
at dawn, let drift your garments one by one,  
follow the clean stroke of a sea-gull’s wing  
breast-high against the sun;  
follow a sail to sunward, slowly nearing  
the lazy lobster boats at Stone Horse Shoals,  
and pass them silent, on a strong ebb-tide  
into an ocean empty to the poles.”

The tall man clenched his eyes against the world;  
his face was gray and shook like a torn sail.  
“I have lived,” he said, “a life that moved in spirals  
turned inward like the shell of a sea-snail.  
I have been the shadow at the heart of shadows,  
I have stared too many years at my own face;  
on Stone Horse Shoals, among the lobster boats,  
I will shed my carapace.

“Something will die there, something move and watch  
its shadow fathoms downward on the sand,  
summer and winter. In another season  
another man comes wading to the land,  
where other blossoms fade among the dunes  
and other children. . . . I am tired,” he said,

"But I can see a naked body climbing  
a naked seacoast, naked of the dead,

"naked of language. There are signs inscribed  
on stones and trees, familiar vocables;  
I hope to rise out of the sea as white,  
as empty and chalk-smooth as cockleshells.  
And children digging naked in the sand  
will find my shell and on it scratch new words  
that soon will blossom out," he said, "and bear  
new fruit, strange to the tongue of men and birds."

### *The Long Voyage*

NOT that the pines were darker there,  
nor mid-May dogwood brighter there,  
nor swifts more swift in summer air;  
it was my own country,

having its thunderclap of spring,  
its long midsummer ripening,  
its corn hoar-stiff at harvesting,  
almost like any country,

yet being mine; its face, its speech,  
its hills bent low within my reach,  
its river birch and upland beech  
were mine, of my own country.

Now the dark waters at the bow  
fold back, like earth against the plow;  
foam brightens like the dogwood now  
at home, in my own country.

*Eight Melons*

AUGUST and on the vine eight melons sleeping,  
drinking the sunlight, sleeping, while below  
their roots obscurely work in the dark loam;

motionless center of the living garden,  
eight belly-shaped, eight woman-colored melons  
swelling and feeding the seeds within them. Guns

west of the mountain at the Frenchman's Bridge;  
they are fighting now at the cold river, they  
are dying for tomorrow. While the melons

sleep, smile in sleeping, in their bellies hoard  
September sweetness, life to outlast the snow.

---

THEODORE SPENCER

---

*Song*

I WHO love you bring  
Against our cherishing  
These faults I daren't deny  
Lest love should prove a lie.  
*But Oh, if you love me forgive me,  
And none of this is true.*

A too resilient mind  
That seeking fact, must find  
Reasons on every side  
Why fact should be denied.  
*But Oh, if you love me forgive me,  
And none of this is true.*

A body that has wooed  
More pleasure than it should,  
And for that pleasure sought  
What it had thrived without.

*But Oh, if you love me, forgive me,  
And none of this is true.*

And until now, a soul  
That could find no goal  
Beyond body and mind;  
And so turned blind.

*But Oh, if you love me, forgive me,  
And none of this is true.*

### *A Reason for Writing*

NO word that is not flesh, he said,  
Can hold my wavering ear; but when  
That golden physical flesh is clear,  
*I dance in a glory like your glory  
With force to stir the dead.*

No word that is not thought, he said,  
Can hook my slippery mind; but when  
That silver accurate thought I find,  
*I dance in a glory like your glory  
With force to stir the dead.*

Words both flesh and thought, he said,  
Hold and hook my heart; and when  
The gold, the silver, shudder apart,  
*Still in a glory like your glory  
I'll dance to stir the dead.*

*Spring Song*

I HAVE come again, gentlemen and ladies,  
Whatever you call me, ladies, gentlemen;  
Dancing, dancing down, sweet ladies,  
And up with a dance I come, kind gentlemen;  
I am here; we are dancing again.

Brown leaf on a dust-hill, ladies, ladies;  
A running ant from the dust-hill, gentlemen;  
Look out of the window; here I am;  
Look back to the bedroom; here I am.  
Sleep; and we'll fall together, gentlemen—  
Falling towers and crumpled gowns  
To a dust, a most sleepy dust, ladies,  
From towers and golden gowns. But sleep,  
Oh sleep again, and I'll promise you green,  
A green, shattering sun-blade green,  
With a daffodil prance like forever, gentlemen,  
Forever a tower of gold like a daffodil.

I have come again, gentlemen and ladies;  
Whatever you call me, a leaf and a dust-hill;  
Dancing up, gentlemen, sweet ladies;  
And dancing down, ladies, kind gentlemen.  
I am here; we are dancing again.

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R. P. BLACKMUR

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*All Things Are a Flowing*

FLOWERS do better here than peas and beans,  
Here nothing men may save can save its mark;

Reason a glitter flowing blues to greens  
Beyond the offshore shoals gains ocean dark.  
The poor within us climb the cliff and stare  
Through second eyes and are sea-beggared there.

Sun warms the flesh, but in the marrow, wind;  
The seagulls over head and neater tern  
Scream woodthrush in the birches out of mind.  
How warm a marrow cold enough to burn!  
There is no shelter here, no self-warm lair,  
When every lung eddies the ocean air.

All's weather here and sure, visible change;  
It is the permutation of the stone,  
The inner crumbling of the mountain range,  
Breathes in our ears sea rôle and moan.  
And this the steadied heart, our own, must bear:  
Suncalm and stormcalm, both in breathless air.

Here men wear natural colours, mostly blue,  
Colour of fusion, shade of unison,  
Colour of nothingness seen twice, come true,  
Colour the gods must be that come undone:  
Colour of succour and mirage, O snare  
And reservoir, death ravens in arrears.

### *Half-Tide Ledge*

SUNDAY the sea made morning worship, sang  
Venite, Kyrie, and a long Amen,  
over a flowing cassock did put on  
glittering blindness, surplice of the sun.  
Towards high noon her eldest, high-run tide  
rebelled at formal song and in the Sanctus  
made heavy heavy mockery of God,  
and I, almost before I knew it, saw  
the altar ledges of the Lord awash.  
These are the obsequies I think on most.



*Scarabs for the Living*

## I

O SAILOR sailor tell me why  
though in the seawine of your eye  
I see nothing dead and nothing die  
I know from the stillness seething there  
my heart's hope is my soul's despair.

## II

To meditate upon the tiger, turn  
your human eyes from his past-human stare;  
beyond his cage a pigeon tops an urn,  
beyond the pigeon falls the twilight air,  
and there, steadfast, he sees a viewless lair.

## III

Lay down one hand before you like a tool  
and let the other, in your mind, grow strange;  
then let the strangers meet. Who but a fool  
or a passionate man, thinks loss is blood-exchange,  
if the cold hand should warm and the hot cool!

## IV

Within this windless covert silence drops  
leaf by leaf and birches make bare bones;  
a startled woodcock's whistling flight new-stops  
the wind beyond the woods, and I, alone,  
feel my still flight trembling into stone.

## V

There is, besides the warmth, in this new love—  
besides the radiance, the spring—the chill  
that in the old had seemed the slow, the still  
amounting up of that indifferent will  
in which we die. I keep last winter's glove.

## VI

Oh, I was honest in the womb  
where I had neither time nor room  
nor any secret hope to hide.  
Now there are love and work this side  
of honesty, two hopes that lied.

## VII

The chickadee-dee-dee is not a bird  
like stilted heron fishing minnie pools  
that in their fleeing shriek the sky like fools;  
the chickadee (dee-dee) is most a word  
to keep the thicket warm when summer cools.

## VIII

It is the slow encroachment, word by word,  
of sleep upon the wakened mind, the slow  
manoeuvre of unseemly vertigo,  
whereby disease in order is inferred;  
and in the sleep a blotting fall of snow.

## IX

Quiet the self, and silence brims like spring:  
the soaking in of light, the gathering

of shadow up, after each passing cloud,  
the green life eating into death aloud,  
the hum of seasons; all on beating wing.

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JOHN PEALE BISHOP

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*A Recollection*

FAMOUSLY she descended, her red hair  
Unbound and bronzed by sea-reflections, caught  
Crinkled with sea-pearls. The fine slender taut  
Knees that let down her feet upon the air,

Young breasts, slim flanks and golden quarries were  
Odder than when the young distraught  
Unknown Venetian, painting her portrait, thought  
He'd not imagined what he painted there.

And I too commerced with that golden cloud:  
Lipped her delicious hands and had my ease  
Faring fantastically, perversely proud.

All loveliness demands our courtesies.  
Since she was dead I praised her as I could  
Silently, among the Barberini bees.

*Fiametta*

FIAMETTA walks under the quincebuds  
In a gown the color of flowers;  
Her small breasts shine through the silken stuff  
Like raindrops after showers.  
The green hem of her dress is silk, but duller  
Than her eye's green color.

Her shadow restores the grass's green—  
Where the sun had gilded it;  
The air has given her copper hair  
The sanguine that was requisite.  
Whatever her flaws, my lady  
Has no fault in her young body.

She leans with her long slender arms  
To pull down morning upon her—  
Fragrance of quince, white light and falling cloud.  
The day shall have lacked due honor  
Until I shall have rightly praised  
Her standing thus with slight arms upraised.

### *Admonition*

LOCK your bedroom doors with terror.  
Comb your hair between two lights.  
In the gold Venetian chamber  
But for them let all be sombre.  
Sit, and see reflected lights  
Color time within your mirror.

Comb, comb, your bright hair. Rain  
Fiery threads upon a shadow.  
Stare until you see dilated  
Eyes stare out as once the excited  
Young men coming out of shadow,  
Stared into a burning pain.

Find the loveliest shroud you own.  
Stilt a ceremonious  
Height on gilded heels. Then summon  
To a rarity grown common  
Starved arachnid, the dead-louse  
And whatever feeds on bone.

*The Return*

NIGHT and we heard heavy cadenced hoofbeats  
Of troops departing; the last cohorts left  
By the North Gate. That night some listened late  
Leaning their eyelids toward Septentrion.

Morning blared and the young tore down the trophies  
And warring ornaments: arches were strong  
And in the sun but stone; no longer conquest  
Circled our columns; all our state was down

In fragments. In the dust, old men with tufted  
Eyebrows whiter than sunbaked faces gulped  
As it fell. But they no more than we remembered  
The old sea-fights, the soldiers' names and sculptors'.

We did not know the end was coming: nor why  
It came; only that long before the end  
Were many wanted to die. Then vultures starved  
And sailed more slowly in the sky.

We still had taxes. Salt was high. The soldiers  
Gone. Now there was much drinking and lewd  
Houses all night loud with riot. But only  
For a time. Soon the taverns had no roofs.

Strangely it was the young, the almost boys,  
Who first abandoned hope; the old still lived  
A little, at last a little lived in eyes.  
It was the young whose child did not survive.

Some slept beneath the simulacra, until  
The gods' faces froze. Then was fear.  
Some had response in dreams, but morning restored  
Interrogation. Then O then, O ruins!

Temples of Neptune invaded by the sea  
And dolphins streaked like streams sportive

As sunlight rode and over the rushing floors  
The sea unfurled and what was blue raced silver.

---

YVOR WINTERS

---

*Heracles*

*Note: Heracles is treated as a sungod, the treatment being based on the discussion in Anthon's Classical Dictionary.*

EURYSTHEUS, trembling, called me to the throne,  
Alcmena's son, heavy with thews and still.  
He drove me on my fatal road alone:  
I went, subservient to Hera's will.

For, when I had resisted, she had struck  
Out of the sky and spun my wit: I slew  
My children, quicker than a stroke of luck,  
With motion lighter than my sinew knew.

Compelled down ways obscure with analogue  
To force the Symbols of the Zodiac—  
Bright Lion, Boundless Hydra, Fiery Dog—  
I spread them on my arms as on a rack:

Spread them and broke them in the groaning wood,  
And yet the Centaur stung me from afar,  
His blood envenomed with the Hydra's blood:  
Thence was I outcast from the earthy war.

Nessus the Centaur, with his wineskin full,  
His branch and thyrsus, and his fleshy grip—  
Her whom he could not force he yet could gull,  
And she drank poison from his bearded lip.

Older than man, evil with age, is life:  
Injustice, direst perfidy, my bane  
Drove me to win my lover and my wife;  
By love and justice I at last was slain.

The numbered Beings of the wheeling track  
I carried singly to the empty throne,  
And yet, when I had come exhausted back,  
Was forced to wait without the gate, alone.

Commanded thus to pause before the gate,  
I felt from my hot breast the tremors pass,  
White flame dissecting the corrupted State,  
Eurystheus vibrant in his den of brass:

Vibrant with horror, though a jewelled king,  
Lest, the heat mounting, madness turn my brain  
For one dry moment, and the palace ring  
With crystal terror ere I turn again.

This stayed me, too: my life was not my own,  
But I my life's; a god I was, not man.  
Grown Absolute, I slew my flesh and bone;  
Timeless, I knew the Zodiac my span.

This was my grief, that out of grief I grew—  
Translated as I was from earth at last,  
From the sad pain that Deianira knew.  
Transmuted slowly in a fiery blast,

Perfect, and moving perfectly, I raid  
Eternal silence to eternal ends:  
And Deianira, an imperfect shade,  
Retreats in silence as my arc descends.

*Sonnet to the Moon*

NOW every leaf, though colorless, burns bright  
With disembodied and celestial light,  
And drops without a movement or a sound  
A pillar of darkness to the shifting ground.

The lucent, thin, and alcoholic flame  
Runs in the stubble with a nervous aim,  
But, when the eye pursues, will point with fire  
Each single stubble-tip and strain no higher.

O triple goddess! Contemplate my plight!  
Opacity, my fate! Change, my delight!  
The yellow tom-cat, sunk in shifting fur,  
Changes and dreams, a phosphorescent blur.

Sullen I wait, but still the vision shun.  
Bodiless thoughts and thoughtless bodies run.

*Sir Gawaine and the Green Knight*

R EPTILIAN green the wrinkled throat,  
Green as a bough of yew the beard;  
He bent his head, and so I smote;  
Then for a thought my vision cleared.

The head dropped clean; he rose and walked;  
He fixed his fingers in the hair;  
The head was unabashed and talked;  
I understood what I must dare.

His flesh, cut down, arose and grew.  
He bade me wait the season's round,  
And then, when he had strength anew,  
To meet him on his native ground.



The year declined; and in his keep  
I passed in joy a thriving yule;  
And whether waking or in sleep,  
I lived in riot like a fool.

He beat the woods to bring me meat.  
His lady, like a forest vine,  
Grew in my arms; the growth was sweet;  
And yet what thoughtless force was mine!

By practice and conviction formed,  
With ancient stubbornness ingrained,  
Although her body clung and swarmed,  
My own identity remained.

Her beauty, lithe, unholy, pure  
Took shapes that I had never known;  
And had I once been insecure,  
Had grafted laurel in my bone.

And then, since I had kept the trust,  
Had loved the lady, yet was true,  
The knight withheld his giant thrust  
And let me go with what I knew.

I left the green bark and the shade,  
Where growth was rapid, thick, and still;  
I found a road that men had made  
And rested on a drying hill.

---

JOHN WHEELWRIGHT

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*Train Ride*

AFTER rain, through afterglow, the unfolding fan  
of railway landscape sidled on the pivot  
of a larger arc into the green of evening;  
I remembered that noon I saw a gradual bud  
still white; though dead in its warm bloom;  
*always the enemy is the foe at home.*

And I wondered what surgery could recover  
our lost, long stride of indolence and leisure  
which is labor in reverse; what physic recalls the smile  
not of lips, but of eyes as of the sea bemused.

We, when we disperse from common sleep to several  
tasks, we gather to despair; we, who assembled  
once for hopes from common toil to dreams  
or sickish and hurting or triumphal rapture;  
*always the enemy is our foe at home.*

We, deafened with far scattered city rattles  
to the hubbub of forest birds (never having  
"had time" to grieve or to hear through vivid sleep  
the sea knock on its cracked and hollow stones)  
so that the stars, almost, and birds comply,  
and the garden-wet; the trees retire; We are  
a scared patrol, fearing the guns behind;  
*always the enemy is the foe at home.*

What wonder that we fear our own eyes' look  
and fidget to be at home alone, and pitifully  
put off age by some change in brushing the hair  
and stumble to our ends like smothered runners at their tape;

Then (as while the stars herd to the great trough  
the blind, in the always-only-outward of their dismantled  
archways, awake at the smell of warmed stone  
or to the sound of reeds, lifting from the dim

into their segment of green dawn) *always*  
*our enemy is our foe at home*, more  
 certainly than through spoken words or from grief-  
 twisted writing on paper, unblotted by tears  
 the thought came:

There is no physic  
 for the world's ill, nor surgery; it must  
 (hot smell of tar on wet salt air)  
 burn in a fever forever, an incense pierced  
 with arrows, whose name is Love and another name  
 Rebellion (the twinge, the gulf, split seconds,  
 the very raindrop, render, and instancy  
 of Love).

All Poetry to this not-to-be-looked-upon sun  
 of Passion is the moon's cupped light; all  
 Politics to this moon, a moon's reflected  
 cupped light, like the moon of Rome, after  
 the deep wells of Grecian light sank low;  
*always the enemy is the foe at home.*

But these three are friends whose arms twine  
 without words; as, in a still air,  
 the great grove leans to wind, past and to come.

### *Fish Food*

AS you drank deep as Thor, did you think of milk or wine?  
 Did you drink blood, while you drank the salt deep?  
 Or see through the film of light, that sharpened your rage with  
 its stare,  
 a shark, dolphin, turtle? Did you not see the Cat  
 who, when Thor lifted her, unbased the cubic ground?  
 You would drain fathomless flagons to be slaked with vacuum—  
 The sea's teats have suckled you, and you are sunk far  
 in bubble-dreams, under swaying translucent vines  
 of thundering interior wonder. Eagles can never now  
 carry parts of your body, over cupped mountains  
 as emblems of their anger, embers to fire self-hate  
 to other wonders, unfolding white flaming vistas.

Fishes now look upon you, with eyes which do not gossip.  
 Fishes are never shocked. Fishes will kiss you, each  
 fish tweak you; every kiss takes bits of you away,  
 till your bones alone will roll, with the Gulf Stream's swell.  
 So has it been already, so have the carpers and puffers  
 nibbled your carcass of fame, each to his liking. Now  
 in tides of noon, the bones of your thought-suspended structures  
 gleam as you intended. Noon pulled your eyes with small  
 magnetic headaches; the will seeped from your blood. Seeds  
 of meaning popped from the pods of thought. And you fall. And  
 the unseen

churn of Time changes the pearl-hued ocean;  
 like a pearl-shaped drop, in a huge water-clock  
 falling; from *came* to *go*, from *come* to *went*. And you fell.  
 Waters received you. Waters of our Birth in Death dissolve you.  
 Now you have willed it, may the Great Wash take you.  
 As the Mother-Lover takes your woe away, and cleansing  
 grief and you away, you sleep, you do not snore.  
 Lie still. Your rage is gone on a bright flood  
 away; as, when a bad friend held out his hand  
 you said, "Do not talk any more. I know you meant no harm."  
 What was the soil whence your anger sprang, who are deaf  
 as the stones to the whispering flight of the Mississippi's rivers?  
 What did you see as you fell? What did you hear as you sank?  
 Did it make you drunken with hearing?  
 I will not ask any more. You saw or heard no evil.

---

 ALLEN TATE
 

---

### *Ode to the Confederate Dead*

ROW after row with strict impunity  
 The headstones yield their names to the element,  
 The wind whirrs without recollection;  
 In the riven troughs the splayed leaves

Pile up, of nature the casual sacrament  
To the seasonal eternity of death;  
Then driven by the fierce scrutiny  
Of heaven to their election in the vast breath,  
They sough the rumor of mortality.

Autumn is desolation in the plot  
Of a thousand acres where these memories grow  
From the inexhaustible bodies that are not  
Dead, but feed the grass row after rich row.  
Think of the autumns that have come and gone!—  
Ambitious November with the humors of the year,  
With a particular zeal for every slab,  
Staining the uncomfortable angels that rot  
On the slabs, a wing chipped here, an arm there:  
The brute curiosity of an angel's stare  
Turns you, like them, to stone,  
Transforms the heaving air  
Till plunged to a heavier world below  
You shift your sea-space blindly  
Heaving, turning like the blind crab.

Dazed by the wind, only the wind  
The leaves flying, plunge

You know who have waited by the wall  
The twilight certainty of an animal,  
Those midnight restitutions of the blood  
You know—the immitigable pines, the smoky frieze  
Of the sky, the sudden call: you know the rage,  
The cold pool left by the mounting flood,  
Of muted Zeno and Parmenides.  
You who have waited for the angry resolution  
Of those desires that should be yours tomorrow,  
You know the unimportant shrift of death  
And praise the vision  
And praise the arrogant circumstance  
Of those who fall

Rank upon rank, hurried beyond decision—  
Here by the sagging gate, stopped by the wall.

Seeing, seeing only the leaves  
Flying, plunge and expire

Turn your eyes to the immoderate past,  
Turn to the inscrutable infantry rising  
Demons out of the earth—they will not last.  
Stonewall, Stonewall, and the sunken fields of hemp,  
Shiloh, Antietam, Malvern Hill, Bull Run.  
Lost in that orient of the thick and fast  
You will curse the setting sun.

Cursing only the leaves crying  
Like an old man in a storm

You hear the shout, the crazy hemlocks point  
With troubled fingers to the silence which  
Smothers you, a mummy, in time.

The hound bitch  
Toothless and dying, in a musty cellar  
Hears the wind only.

Now that the salt of their blood  
Stiffens the saltier oblivion of the sea,  
Seals the malignant purity of the flood,  
What shall we who count our days and bow  
Our heads with a commemorial woe  
In the ribboned coats of grim felicity,  
What shall we say of the bones, unclean,  
Whose verdurous anonymity will grow?  
The ragged arms, the ragged heads and eyes  
Lost in these acres of the insane green?  
The gray lean spiders come, they come and go;  
In a tangle of willows without light  
The singular screech-owl's tight

Invisible lyric seeds the mind  
With the furious murmur of their chivalry.

We shall say only the leaves  
Flying, plunge and expire

We shall say only the leaves whispering  
In the improbable mist of nightfall  
That flies on multiple wing:  
Night is the beginning and the end  
And in between the ends of distraction  
Waits mute speculation, the patient curse  
That stones the eyes, or like the jaguar leaps  
For his own image in a jungle pool, his victim.

What shall we say who have knowledge  
Carried to the heart? Shall we take the act  
To the grave? Shall we, more hopeful, set up the grave  
In the house? The ravenous grave?

Leave now  
The shut gate and the decomposing wall:  
The gentle serpent, green in the mulberry bush,  
Riots with his tongue through the hush—  
Sentinel of the grave who counts us all!

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HART CRANE

---

*Voyages*

(II)

AND yet this great wink of eternity,  
Of rimless floods, unfettered leewardings,

Samite sheeted and processioned where  
 Her undinal vast belly moonward bends,  
 Laughing the wrapt inflections of our love;

Take this Sea, whose diapason knells  
 On scrolls of silver snowy sentences,  
 The sceptred terror of whose sessions rends  
 As her demeanors motion well or ill,  
 All but the pieties of lovers' hands.

And onward, as bells off San Salvador  
 Salute the crocus lustres of the stars,  
 In these poinsettia meadows of her tides,—  
 Adagios of islands, O my Prodigal,  
 Complete the dark confessions her veins spell.

Mark how her turning shoulders wind the hours,  
 And hasten while her penniless rich palms  
 Pass superscription of bent foam and wave,—  
 Hasten, while they are true,—sleep, death, desire,  
 Close round one instant in one floating flower.

Bind us in time, O Seasons clear, and awe.  
 O minstrel galleons of Carib fire,  
 Bequeath us to no earthly shore until  
 Is answered in the vortex of our grave  
 The seal's wide spindrift gaze toward paradise.

### *The River*

(from *The Bridge*)

STICK your patent name on a signboard  
 brother—all over—going west—young man  
 Tintex—Japalac—Certain-teed Overalls ads  
 and lands sakes! under the new playbill ripped  
 in the guaranteed corner—see Bert Williams what?

. . . and  
 past the din  
 and slogans  
 of the year —



Minstrels when you steal a chicken just  
 save me the wing for if it isn't  
 Erie it ain't for miles around a  
 Mazda—and the telegraphic night coming on  
 Thomas

a Ediford—and whistling down the tracks  
 a headlight rushing with the sound—can you  
 imagine—while an express makes time like  
 SCIENCE—COMMERCE and the HOLY GHOST  
 RADIO ROARS IN EVERY HOME WE HAVE THE NORTHPOLE  
 WALLSTREET AND VIRGIN BIRTH WITHOUT STONES OR  
 WIRES OR EVEN RUNNING brooks connecting ears  
 and no more sermons windows flashing roar  
 Breathtaking—as you like it . . . eh?

So the 20th Century—so  
 whizzed the Limited—roared by and left  
 three men, still hungry on the tracks, ploddingly  
 watching the tail lights wizen and converge, slip-  
 ping gimleted and neatly out of sight.

\*

The last bear, shot drinking in the Dakotas  
 Loped under wires that span the mountain stream.  
 Keen instruments, strung to a vast precision  
 Bind town to town and dream to ticking dream.  
 But some men take their liquor slow—and count  
 —Though they'll confess no rosary nor clue—  
 The river's minute by the far brook's year.  
 Under a world of whistles, wires and steam  
 Caboose-like they go ruminating through  
 Ohio, Indiana—blind baggage—  
 To Cheyenne tagging . . . Maybe Kalamazoo.

*to those  
 whose ad-  
 dresses are  
 never near*

Time's readings, time's blendings they construe  
 As final reckonings of fire and snow;  
 Strange bird-wit, like the elemental gist  
 Of unvalled winds they offer, singing low  
*My Old Kentucky Home and Casey Jones,*

*Some Sunny Day.* I heard a road-gang chanting so.  
And afterwards, who had a colt's eyes—one said,  
"Jesus! Oh I remember watermelon days!" And sped  
High in a cloud of merriment, recalled

"—And when my Aunt Sally Simpson smiled," he  
drawled—

"It was almost Louisiana, long ago."

"There's no place like Booneville though, Buddy,"

One said, excising a last burr from his vest,

"—For early troutng." Then peering in the can,

"—But I kept on the tracks." Possessed, resigned,

He trod the fire down pensively and grinned,  
Spreading dry shingles of a beard. . . .

#### Behind

My father's cannery works I used to see

Rail-squatters ranged in nomad rallery,

The ancient men—wifeless or runaway

Hobo-trekkers that forever search

An empire wilderness of freight and rails.

Each seemed a child, like me, on a loose perch,

Holding to childhood like some termless play.

John, Jake or Charley, hopping the slow freight

—Memphis to Tallahassee—riding the rods,

Blind fists of nothing, humpty-dumpty clods.

Yet they touch something like a key perhaps.

From pole to pole across the hills, the states

—They know a body under the wide rain;

Youngsters with eyes like fjords, old reprobates

With racetrack jargon,—dotting immensity

They lurk across her, knowing her yonder breast

Snow-silvered, sumac-stained or smoky blue—

Is past the valley-sleepers, south or west.

—As I have trod the rumorous midnights, too,

And past the circuit of the lamp's thin flame

(O Nights that brought me to her body bare!)

*but who  
have touched  
her, knowing  
her without  
name*

Have dreamed beyond the print that bound her  
name.

Trains sounding the long blizzards out—I heard  
Wail into distances I knew were hers.  
Papooses crying on the wind's long mane  
Screamed redskin dynasties that fled the brain,  
—Dead echoes! But I knew her body there,  
Time like a serpent down her shoulder, dark,  
And space, an eaglet's wing, laid on her hair.

Under the Ozarks, domed by Iron Mountain,  
The old gods of the rain lie wrapped in pools  
Where eyeless fish curvet a sunken fountain  
And re-descend with corn from querulous crows.  
Such pilferings make up their timeless eatage,  
Propitiate them for their timber torn  
By iron, iron—always the iron dealt cleavage!  
They doze now, below axe and powder horn.

*nor the  
myths of her  
fathers . . .*

And Pullman breakfasters glide glistening steel  
From tunnel into field—iron strides the dew—  
Straddles the hill, a dance of wheel on wheel.  
You have a half-hour's wait at Siskiyou,  
Or stay the night and take the next train through.  
Southward, near Cairo passing, you can see  
The Ohio merging,—borne down Tennessee;  
And if it's summer and the sun's in dusk  
Maybe the breeze will lift the River's musk  
—As though the waters breathed that you might  
know

*Memphis Johnny, Steamboat Bill, Missouri Joe.*

Oh, lean from the window, if the train slows down,  
As though you touched hands with some ancient  
clown,

—A little while gaze absently below  
And hum *Deep River* with them while they go.

Yes, turn again and sniff once more—look see,  
O Sheriff, Brakeman and Authority—

Hitch up your pants and crunch another quid,  
For you, too, feed the River timelessly.  
And few evade full measure of their fate;  
Always they smile out eerily what they seem.  
I could believe he joked at heaven's gate—  
Dan Midland—jolted from the cold brake-beam.

Down, down—born pioneers in time's despite,  
Grimed tributaries to an ancient flow—  
They win no frontier by their wayward plight,  
But drift in stillness, as from Jordan's brow.

You will not hear it as the sea; even stone  
Is not more hushed by gravity . . . But slow,  
As loth to take more tribute—sliding prone  
Like one whose eyes were buried long ago

The River, spreading, flows—and spends your  
dream.

What are you, lost within this tideless spell?  
You are your father's father, and the stream—  
A liquid theme that floating niggers swell.

Damp tonnage and alluvial march of days—  
Nights turbid, vascular with silted shale  
And roots surrendered down of moraine clays:  
The Mississippi drinks the farthest dale.

O quarrying passion, undertowed sunlight!  
The basalt surface drags a jungle grace  
Ochreous and lynx-barred in lengthening might;  
Patience! and you shall reach the biding place!

Over De Soto's bones the freighted floors  
Throb past the City storied of three thrones.  
Down two more turns the Mississippi pours  
(Anon tall ironsides up from salt lagoons)

And flows within itself, heaps itself free.  
All fades but one thin skyline 'round . . . Ahead

No embrace opens but the stinging sea;  
The River lifts itself from its long bed,

Poised wholly on its dream, a mustard glow  
Tortured with history, its one will—flow!  
—The Passion spreads in wide tongues, choked and  
slow,  
Meeting the Gulf, hosannas silently below.

### *The Dance*

(from *The Bridge*)

THE swift red flesh, a winter king—  
Who squired the glacier woman down the sky  
She ran the neighing canyons all the spring;  
She spouted arms; she rose with maize—to die.

And in the autumn drouth, whose burnished hands  
With mineral wariness found out the stone  
Where prayers, forgotten, streamed the mesa sands?  
He holds the twilight's dim, perpetual throne.

Mythical brows we saw retiring—loth,  
Disturbed and destined, into denser green.  
Greeting they sped us, on the arrow's oath:  
Now lie incorrigibly what years between . . .

There was a bed of leaves, and broken play;  
There was a veil upon you, Pocahontas, bride—  
O Princess whose brown lap was virgin May;  
And bridal flanks and eyes hid tawny pride.

I left the village for dogwood. By the canoe  
Tugging below the mill-race, I could see  
Your hair's keen crescent running, and the blue  
First moth of evening take wing stealthily.

*Then you  
shall see her  
truly—your  
blood  
remembering  
its first  
invasion of  
her secrecy,  
its first  
encounters  
with her kin,  
her chieftain  
lover . . . his  
shade that  
haunts the  
lakes and  
bills*

What laughing chains the water wove and threw!  
I learned to catch the trout's moon whisper; I  
Drifted how many hours I never knew,  
But, watching, saw that fleet young crescent die,—

And one star, swinging, take its place, alone,  
Cupped in the larches of the mountain pass—  
Until, immortally, it bled into the dawn.  
I left my sleek boat nibbling margin grass . . .

I took the portage climb, then chose  
A further valley-shed; I could not stop.  
Feet nozzled wat'ry webs of upper flows;  
One white veil gusted from the very top.

O Appalachian Spring! I gained the ledge;  
Steep, inaccessible smile that eastward bends  
And northward reaches in that violet wedge  
Of Adirondacks!—wisped of azure wands,

Over how many bluffs, tarns, streams I sped!  
—And knew myself within some boding shade:—  
Grey tepees tufting the blue knolls ahead,  
Smoke swirling through the yellow chestnut  
glade . . .

A distant cloud, a thunder-bud—it grew,  
That blanket of the skies: the padded foot  
Within,—I heard it; 'til its rhythm drew,  
—Siphoned the black pool from the heart's hot root!

A cyclone threshes in the turbine crest,  
Swooping in eagle feathers down your back;  
Know, Maquokeeta, greeting; know death's best;  
—Fall, Sachem, strictly as the tamarack!

A birch kneels. All her whistling fingers fly.  
The oak grove circles in a crash of leaves;  
The long moan of a dance is in the sky.  
Dance, Maquokeeta: Pocahontas grieves . . .

And every tendon scurries toward the twangs  
Of lightning deltaed down your saber hair.  
Now snaps the flint in every tooth; red fangs  
And splay tongues thinly busy the blue air . . .

Dance, Maquokeeta! snake that lives before,  
That casts his pelt, and lives beyond! Sprout, horn!  
Spark, tooth! Medicine-man, relent, restore—  
Lie to us,—dance us back the tribal morn!

Spears and assemblies: black drums thrusting on—  
O yelling battlements,—I, too, was liege  
To rainbows currying each pulsant bone:  
Surpassed the circumstance, danced out the siege!

And buzzard-circleted, screamed from the stake;  
I could not pick the arrows from my side.  
Wrapped in that fire, I saw more escorts wake—  
Flickering, sprint up the hill groins like a tide.

I heard the hush of lava wrestling your arms,  
And stag teeth foam about the raven throat;  
Flame cataracts of heaven in seething swarms  
Fed down your anklets to the sunset's moat.

O, like the lizard in the furious noon,  
That drops his legs and colors in the sun,  
—And laughs, pure serpent, Time itself, and moon  
Of his own fate, I saw thy change begun!

And saw thee dive to kiss that destiny  
Like one white meteor, sacrosanct and blent  
At last with all that's consummate and free  
There, where the first and last gods keep thy tent.

\*

Thewed of the levin, thunder-shod and lean,  
Lo, through what infinite seasons dost thou gaze—  
Across what bivouacs of thin angered slain,  
And see'st thy bride immortal in the maize!

Totem and fire-gall, slumbering pyramid—  
 Though other calendars now stack the sky,  
 Thy freedom is her largesse, Prince, and hid  
 On paths thou knewest best to claim her by.

High unto Labrador the sun strikes free  
 Her speechless dream of snow, and stirred again,  
 She is the torrent and the singing tree;  
 And she is virgin to the last of men . . .

West, west and south! winds over Cumberland  
 And winds across the llano grass resume  
 Her hair's warm sibilance. Her breasts are fanned  
 O stream by slope and vineyard—into bloom!

And when the caribou slant down for salt  
 Do arrows thirst and leap? Do antlers shine  
 Alert, star-triggered in the listening vault  
 Of dusk?—And are her perfect brows to thine?

We danced, O Brave, we danced beyond their farms,  
 In cobalt desert closures made our vows . . .  
 Now is the strong prayer folded in thine arms,  
 The serpent with the eagle in the boughs.

### *Indiana*

(from *The Bridge*)

THE morning-glory, climbing the morning long  
 Over the lintel on its wiry vine,  
 Closes before the dusk, furls in its song  
 As I close mine . . .

*. . . and  
 read her in a  
 mother's  
 farewell  
 gaze.*

And bison thunder rends my dreams no more  
 As once my womb was torn, my boy, when you  
 Yielded your first cry at the prairie's door . . .  
 Your father knew



Then, though we'd buried him behind us, far  
Back on the gold trail—then his lost bones  
stirred . . .

But you who drop the scythe to grasp the oar  
Knew not, nor heard.

How we, too, Prodigal, once rode off, too—  
Waved Seminary Hill a gay good-bye . . .  
We found God lavish there in Colorado  
But passing sly.

The pebbles sang, the firecat slunk away  
And glistening through the sluggard freshets came  
In golden syllables loosed from the clay  
His gleaming name.

A dream called Eldorado was his town,  
It rose up shambling in the nuggets' wake,  
It had no charter but a promised crown  
Of claims to stake.

But we,—too late, too early, howsoever—  
Won nothing out of fifty-nine—those years—  
But gilded promise, yielded to us never,  
And barren tears . . .

The long trail back! I huddled in the shade  
Of wagon-tenting looked out once and saw  
Bent westward, passing on a stumbling jade  
A homeless squaw—

Perhaps a halfbreed. On her slender back  
She cradled a babe's body, riding without rein.  
Her eyes, strange for an Indian's, were not black  
But sharp with pain

And like twin stars. They seemed to shun the gaze  
Of all our silent men—the long team line—  
Until she saw me—when their violet haze  
Lit with love shine . . .

I held you up—I suddenly the bolder,  
Knew that mere words could not have brought us  
nearer.

She nodded—and that smile across her shoulder  
Will still endear her

As long as Jim, your father's memory, is warm.  
Yes, Larry, now you're going to sea, remember  
You were the first—before Ned and this farm,—  
First-born, remember—

And since then—all that's left to me of Jim  
Whose folks, like mine, came out of Arrowhead.  
And you're the only one with eyes like him—  
Kentucky bred!

I'm standing still, I'm old, I'm half of stone!  
Oh, hold me in those eyes' engaging blue;  
There's where the stubborn years gleam and atone,—  
Where gold is true!

Down the dim turnpike to the river's edge—  
Perhaps I'll hear the mare's hoofs to the ford . . .  
Write me from Rio . . . and you'll keep your  
pledge;  
I know your word!

Come back to Indiana—not too late!  
(Or will you be a ranger to the end?)  
Good-bye . . . Good-bye . . . oh, I shall always  
wait  
You, Larry, traveller—  
stranger,  
son,  
—my friend—

*Atlantis*(from *The Bridge*)

*Music is then the knowledge of that which  
relates to love in harmony and system.*

—PLATO

THROUGH the bound cable strands, the arching path  
Upward, veering with light, the flight of strings,—  
Taut miles of shuttling moonlight syncopate  
The whispered rush, telepathy of wires.  
Up the index of night, granite and steel—  
Transparent meshes—fleckless the gleaming staves—  
Sibylline voices flicker, waveringly stream  
As though a god were issue of the strings. . . .

And through that cordage, threading with its call  
One arc synoptic of all tides below—  
Their labyrinthine mouths of history  
Pouring reply as though all ships at sea  
Complichted in one vibrant breath made cry,—  
“Make thy love sure—to weave whose song we ply!”  
—From black embankments, moveless soundings hailed,  
So seven oceans answer from their dream.

And on, obliquely up bright carrier bars  
New octaves trestle the twin monoliths  
Beyond whose frosted capes the moon bequeaths  
Two worlds of sleep (O arching strands of song!)—  
Onward and up the crystal-flooded aisle  
White tempest nets file upward, upward ring  
With silver terraces the humming spars,  
The loft of vision, palladium helm of stars.

Sheerly the eyes, like seagulls stung with rime—  
Slit and propelled by glistening fins of light—

Pick biting way up towering looms that press  
Sidelong with flight of blade on tendon blade  
—Tomorrows into yesteryear—and link  
What cipher-script of time no traveller reads  
But who, through smoking pyres of love and death,  
Searches the timeless laugh of mythic spears.

Like hails, farewells—up planet-sequined heights  
Some trillion whispering hammers glimmer Tyre:  
Serenely, sharply up the long anvil cry  
Of inchling æons silence rivets Troy.  
And you, aloft there—Jason! hesting Shout!  
Still wrapping harness to the swarming air!  
Silvery the rushing wake, surpassing call,  
Beams yelling Æolus! splintered in the straits!

From gulfs unfolding, terrible of drums,  
Tall Vision-of-the-Voyage, tensely spare—  
Bridge, lifting night to cycloramic crest  
Of deepest day—O Choir, translating time  
Into what multitudinous Verb the suns  
And synergy of waters ever fuse, recast  
In myriad syllables,—Psalm of Cathay!  
O Love, thy white, pervasive Paradigm . . . !

We left the haven hanging in the night—  
Sheened harbor lanterns backward fled the keel.  
Pacific here at time's end, bearing corn,—  
Eyes stammer through the pangs of dust and steel.  
And still the circular, indubitable frieze  
Of heaven's meditation, yoking wave  
To kneeling wave, one song devoutly binds—  
The vernal strophe chimes from deathless strings!

O Thou steeled Cognizance whose leap commits  
The agile precincts of the lark's return;  
Within whose lariat sweep encinctured sing  
In single chrysalis the many twain,—

Of stars Thou art the stitch and stallion glow  
And like an organ, Thou, with sound of doom—  
Sight, sound and flesh Thou ledest from time's realm  
As love strikes clear direction for the helm.

Swift peal of secular light, intrinsic Myth  
Whose fell unshadow is death's utter wound,—  
O River-throated—iridescently upborne  
Through the bright drench and fabric of our veins;  
With white escarpments swinging into light,  
Sustained in tears the cities are endowed  
And justified conclamant with ripe fields  
Revolving through their harvests in sweet torment.

Forever Deity's glittering Pledge, O Thou  
Whose canticle fresh chemistry assigns  
To rapt inception and beatitude,—  
Always through blinding cables, to our joy,  
Of thy white seizure springs the prophecy:  
Always through spiring cordage, pyramids  
Of silver sequel, Deity's young name  
Kinetic of white choiring wings . . . ascends.

Migrations that must needs void memory,  
Inventions that cobblestone the heart,—  
Unspeakable Thou Bridge to Thee, O Love.  
Thy pardon for this history, whitest Flower,  
O Answerer of all,—Anemone,—  
Now while thy petals spend the suns about us, hold—  
(O Thou whose radiance doth inherit me)  
Atlantis,—hold thy floating singer late!

So to thine Everpresence, beyond time,  
Like spears ensanguined of one tolling star  
That bleeds infinity—the orphic strings,  
Sidereal phalanxes, leap and converge:  
—One Song, one Bridge of Fire! Is it Cathay,  
Now pity steeps the grass and rainbows ring  
The serpent with the eagle in the leaves . . . ?  
Whispers antiphonal in azure swing.

*Paraphrase*

OF a steady winking beat between  
Systole, diastole spokes-of-a-wheel  
One rushing from the bed at night  
May find the record wedged in his soul.

Above the feet the clever sheets  
Lie guard upon the integers of life:  
For what skims in between uncurls the toe,  
Involves the hands in purposeless repose.

But from its bracket how can the tongue tell  
When systematic morn shall sometime flood  
The pillow—how desperate is the light  
That shall not rouse, how faint the crow's cavil

As, when stunned in that antarctic blaze,  
Your head, unrocking to a pulse, already  
Hollowed by air, posts a white paraphrase  
Among bruised roses on the papered wall.

*In Shadow*

OUT in the late amber afternoon,  
Confused among chrysanthemums,  
Her parasol, a pale balloon,  
Like a waiting moon, in shadow swims.

Her furtive lace and misty hair  
Over the garden dial distill  
The sunlight,—then withdrawing, wear  
Again the shadows at her will.

Gently yet suddenly, the sheen  
Of stars inwraps her parasol.  
She hears my step behind the green  
Twilight, stiller than shadows, fall.

"Come, it is too late,—too late  
To risk alone the light's decline:  
Nor has the evening long to wait,"—  
But her own words are night's and mine.

### *Legend*

AS silent as a mirror is believed  
Realities plunge in silence by . . .

I am not ready for repentance;  
Nor to match regrets. For the moth  
Bends no more than the still  
Imploring flame. And tremorous  
In the white falling flakes  
Kisses are,—  
The only worth all granting.

It is to be learned—  
This cleaving and this burning,  
But only by the one who  
Spends out himself again.

Twice and twice  
(Again the smoking souvenir,  
Bleeding eidolon!) and yet again.  
Until the bright logic is won  
Unwhispering as a mirror  
Is believed.

Then, drop by caustic drop, a perfect cry  
Shall string some constant harmony,—  
Relentless caper for all those who step  
The legend of their youth into the noon.

*Voyages*

## (VI)

WHERE icy and bright dungeons lift  
Of swimmers their lost morning eyes,  
And ocean rivers, churning, shift  
Green borders under stranger skies,

Steadily as a shell secretes  
Its beating leagues of monotone,  
Or as many waters trough the sun's  
Red kelson past the cape's wet stone;

O rivers mingling toward the sky  
And harbor of the phoenix' breast—  
My eyes pressed black against the prow,  
—Thy derelict and blinded guest

Waiting, afire, what name, unspoke,  
I cannot claim: let thy waves rear  
More savage than the death of kings,  
Some splintered garland for the seer.

Beyond siroccos harvesting  
The solstice thunders, crept away,  
Like a cliff swinging or a sail  
Flung into April's inmost day—

Creation's blithe and petalled word  
To the lounged goddess when she rose  
Conceding dialogue with eyes  
That smile unsearchable repose—

Still fervid covenant, Belle Isle,  
—Unfolded floating dais before  
Which rainbows twine continual hair—  
Belle Isle, white echo of the oar!



The imaged Word, it is, that holds  
Hushed willows anchored in its glow.  
It is the unbetrayable reply  
Whose accent no farewell can know.

---

LEONIE ADAMS

---

*Country Summer*

NOW the rich cherry whose sleek wood  
And top with silver petals traced,  
Like a strict box its gems encased,  
Has spilt from out that cunning lid,  
All in an innocent green round,  
Those melting rubies which it hid;  
With moss ripe-strawberry-encrusted,  
So birds get half, and minds lapse merry  
To taste that deep-red lark's-bite berry,  
And blackcap-bloom is yellow-dusted.

The wren that thieved it in the eaves  
A trailer of the rose could catch  
To her poor droopy sloven thatch,  
And side by side with the wren's brood,—  
A lovely time of beggars' luck—  
Opens the quaint and hairy bud.  
And full and golden is the yield  
Of cows that never have to house.  
But all night nibble under boughs,  
Or cool their sides in the moist field.

Into the rooms flow meadow airs,  
The warm farm-baking smell blows round;  
Inside and out and sky and ground

Are much the same; the wishing star,  
Hesperus, kind and early-born,  
Is risen only finger-far.  
All stars stand close in summer air,  
And tremble, and look mild as amber;  
When wicks are lighted in the chamber  
You might say stars were settling there.

Now straightening from the flowery hay,  
Down the still light the mowers look;  
Or turn, because their dreaming shook,  
And they waked half to other days,  
When left alone in yellow-stubble,  
The rusty-coated mare would graze.  
Yet thick the lazy dreams are born;  
Another thought can come to mind,  
But like the shivering of the wind,  
Morning and evening in the corn.

### *Sundown*

THIS is the time lean woods shall spend  
A steeped-up twilight, and the pale evening drink,  
And the perilous roe, the leaper to the west brink,  
Trembling and bright, to the caverned cloud descend.

Now shall you see pent oak gone gusty and frantic,  
Stooped with dry weeping, ruinously unloosing  
The sparse disheveled leaf, or reared and tossing  
A dreary scarecrow bough in funeral antic.

Aye, tatter you and rend,  
Oak heart, to your profession mourning, not obscure  
The outcome, not crepuscular, on the deep floor,  
Sable and gold match lusters and contend.

And rags of shrouding will not muffle the slain.  
This is the immortal extinction, the priceless wound

Not to be staunched; the live gold leaks beyond,  
And matter's sanctified, dipped in a gold stain.

---

OSCAR WILLIAMS

---

*Dwarf of Disintegration*

I

WHO is it runs through the many storied mansion of myth  
With the exaggerated child's-head among pillars and  
palings,  
Holding in his grip the balloons of innumerable windows  
And chased by the flowing malevolent army of the ceilings?

It is the dwarf, the yellow dwarf, with the minted cheeks,  
With the roots of the fingers, with the wafer-thin cry  
In a maze of walls, lost in the nurseries of definition,  
While shadows dance on shins of trumpets in a waning sky.

Voices are wired in the walls and rats are gnawing rumors,  
The throat of music is bursting with the leadpipes of lust,  
And the giant's face on the dwarf's shoulders is frightened  
As the battle sounds strike the panes from the near-by past.

The pillars in the palace are reclining about like pistons  
And the horses of parenthesis have run away into the woods:  
The king is caught on the vast flypaper of the people:  
There are holes as big as hovels in the wall of platitude.

The queen is ill from planting the garden with progeny  
And her eyes are crossed off by vicious marks from her face:  
She telephones the dwarf who puts his head in the instrument  
To find his features come out in glacial coal bins of space.

The orgasms of distant guns attack at the lustful curtains  
And soldiers are standing about in historical knots of lies  
Warming the frozen tag-ends of lives around the spontaneous  
Combustion of bosses who are stoking hollows of hired eyes.

The swine bulge in the snake bellies of the telegraph wires  
And bellow under flat clouds of ceilings in the interior;  
Communication swallows the quicksilver swords of distance;  
Headlines perform, in squadrons of plumes, on the warriors.

But the draughty palace of fable is full of feeble splendor,  
And the yellow dwarf now in possession of knowing documents  
Runs after the newspapers cackling on the edge of freedom  
While the golden cupboards tremble for the aging sentiments.

The music of battlefields exhilarates the hidden overhead  
And injects into the air a breakdown sense of release,  
And the numerals wriggle off the lock boxes of the world  
Unloosing a swarm of the venomous vultures of the peace.

But the dwarf, the yellow dwarf, with the sunspots for eyes  
Is hunting in the archives in the moth holes in the palace,  
And he tightens the torture boot around the spinal column,  
The steel twilight gleaming with the sweat of his malice.

## II

Now that the battle is on, keep off the palace grounds,  
You can hear the dwarf rummaging in the elephant inside:  
It's better to draw a curtain of birds around your eyes,  
Or fall into the picture book under the thumb of a landslide—

Than to come upon spiders eating the iris of the eyeball,  
Or glimpse the yellow dwarf digesting the members of princes,  
Or see the famous paintings loll, like tongues, from their frames  
Into a roomful of heroes pretending to harass pretenses.

The sagging structure is propped between thought and thinker,  
The gilded lawns flow on under the smokescreen of the laws:  
The allover attack of a decaying body infiltrates to the atom,  
Even the beast in the violin hangs out with lopped-off paws.

So run into the first thicket of verbs, the nest of deeds,  
Place a skyline between yourself and the grandiose emblem,  
For the inquisition wears the hypocritical jowls of a palace,  
There's nothing here to salvage, and yours is another problem.

### *The Leg in the Subway*

WHEN I saw the woman's leg on the floor of the subway  
train,  
Protrude beyond the panel (while her body overflowed my  
mind's eye),  
When I saw the pink stocking, black shoe, curve bulging with  
warmth,  
The delicate etching of the hair behind the flesh-colored gauze,  
When I saw the ankle of Mrs. Nobody going nowhere for a  
nickel,  
When I saw this foot motionless on the moving motionless floor,  
My mind caught on a nail of a distant star, I was wrenched out  
Of the reality of the subway ride, I hung in a socket of distance:  
And this is what I saw:

The long tongue of the earth's speed was licking the leg,  
Upward and under and around went the long tongue of speed:  
It was made of a flesh invisible, it dripped the saliva of miles:  
It drank moment, lit shivers of insecurity in niches between  
bones:  
It was full of eyes, it stopped licking to look at the passengers:  
It was as alive as a worm, and busier than anybody in the train:

It spoke saying: To whom does this leg belong? Is it a bonus leg  
For the rush hour? Is it a forgotten leg? Among the many  
Myriads of legs did an extra leg fall in from the Out There?  
O Woman, sliced off bodily by the line of the panel, shall I roll

Your leg into the abdominal nothing, among the digestive teeth?  
Or shall I fit it in with the pillars that hold up the headlines?  
But nobody spoke, though all the faces were talking silently,  
As the train zoomed, a zipper closing up swiftly the seam of  
time.

Alas, said the long tongue of the speed of the earth quite faintly,  
What is one to do with an incorrigible leg that will not melt—  
But everybody stopped to listen to the train vomiting cauldrons  
Of silence, while somebody's jolted-out afterthought trickled  
down

The blazing shirt-front solid with light bulbs, and just then  
The planetary approach of the next station exploded atoms of  
light,  
And when the train stopped, the leg had grown a surprising  
mate,  
And the long tongue had slipped hurriedly out through a  
window:

I perceived through the hole left by the nail of the star in my  
mind  
How civilization was as dark as a wood and dimensional with  
things  
And how birds dipped in chromium sang in the crevices of our  
deeds.

### *Dinner Guest*

EVENING, and the slender sugar tongs of a bird's small voice  
Pick up the flawless square of our mood from the rim of  
thought:

We see the down on the big blond face of the Everywhere,  
And the sudden flashing of the carnivorous smile of nature.

We are having dinner with the formal ogre of allness  
At the Arts Club among the mirrors and paintings of mirrors:  
It is a breakwater moment and against a wall of grinning face  
We perceive a radio, the last tooth posted within that mirth.

The cuckoo of light hops out, calling intimate time of the heart  
Across the immaculate landscape of the tablecloth and the wine  
Of realization, while the hands like gaunt animals are prowling  
At the fable's edge, pecking at the crumbs of recrimination.

Dinner time, and the nervous system stretches its starved legs  
Into the future, like a driven nail stretching out its length  
Into a sea of wood; we are held by a hunger that is good for life;  
And Tom Thumb is the guest of the ogre with the gracious  
mouth.

The famous paintings around us know how to stay adroitly dead  
Giving off the soft lustre of the past and without blinking:  
The dinner in the Arts Club flows on, a river of abstraction,  
We are miles from the insane beggar who mumbled for a nickel.

Whatever we die of, we shall never die of compassion  
In a world lined to the browline with the bins of injustice;  
Our fears leaven the bank balance to a frightening sum,  
But the genial dinner ransoms the moment fallen among bandits.

We need no death's-head like the Egyptians had at their feasts,  
The murdered circumstance stands with wet paws on the marble  
Escaped from a movie of the future in the corner arcade;  
Dining rooms grow dangerous in an age of guess and garble.

Though we soak our walls in music, patch the eye's blindspots  
With murals of morals and dash about in a mess of mass,  
We go through a lot of nature with our stupendous digestion  
To reach the certainty of one noble sensation at the heart.

Ours is a last supper, without disciples; it is the atom supping  
With the boulder, the bead of sweat with the cold great lake,  
The eyeball's gloss with a planet on fire, the dot entertained  
By encyclopedias of nonsense; man is the guest of the ogre mind.

*The Man Coming Toward You*

THE man coming toward you is falling forward on all fronts:  
He has just come in from the summer hot box of circumstance,

His obedient arm pulls a ticket from the ticket machine,  
A bell announces to the long tables his presence on the scene;  
The room is crowded with Last Suppers and the air is angry;  
The halleluiahs lift listless heads; the man is hungry.

He looks at the people, the rings of lights, the aisles, the chairs,  
They mass and attack his eyes and they take him unawares,  
But in a moment it is over and the immense hippopotamus cries  
And swims away to safety in the vast past of his eyes;  
The weeks recoil before the days, the years before the months;  
The man is hungry and keeps moving forward on all fronts.

His hair is loosening, his teeth are at bay, he breathes fear,  
His nails send futile tendrils into the belly of the atmosphere;  
Every drop of his blood is hanging loose in the universe;  
His children's faces everywhere bring down the college doors;  
He is growing old on all fronts; his foes and his friends  
Are bleeding behind invisible walls bedecked with dividends;

His wife is aging, and his skin puts on its anonymous gloves;  
The man is helpless, surrounded by two billion hates and loves;  
Look at him squirm inside his clothes, the harpies around his  
ears,

In just one minute his brother will have aged four thousand  
years.

Who records his stupendous step on the delicate eardrum of  
Chance?

The man coming toward you is marching forward on all fronts.



*The Last Supper*

## I

APOSTLES of the hidden sun  
Are come unto the room of breath  
Hung with the banging blinds of death,  
The body twelve, the spirit one,  
Far as the eye, in earth arrayed,  
The night shining, the supper laid.

## II

The wine shone on the table that evening of history  
Like an enormous ruby in the bauble and mystery.

In the glowing walls of the flickering decanter  
There moved His face as at the world's center.

The hands of Judas showed up red and hurried  
And the light hit them so, like a cross carried.

The faces of the others were there and moving  
In the crystal of the dome, swiftly hovering.

The saints, under a lens, shrunken to pigmies,  
Gesticulated in birds or in colored enigmas.

Outside there was a storm, the sound of temblors,  
The blood bubbled and sprang into the tumblers.

When the morning came like a white wall of stone,  
The day lay in the glass and the blood was gone.

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MARYA ZATURENSKA

---

*The White Dress*

IMPERCEPTIVELY the world became haunted by her white dress.

Walking in forest or garden, he would start to see,  
Her flying form; sudden, swift, brief as a caress  
The flash of her white dress against a darkening tree.

And with forced unconcern, withheld desire, and pain  
He beheld her at night; and when sleepless in his bed,  
Her light footfalls seemed loud as cymbals; deep as his disdain,  
Her whiteness entered his heart, flowed through from feet to head.

Or it was her face at a window, her swift knock at the door,  
Then she appeared in her white dress, her face as white as her gown;

Like snow in midsummer she came and left the rich day poor;  
And the sun chilled and grew higher, remote, and the moon slipped down.

So the years passed; more fierce in pursuit her image grew;  
She became the dream abjured, the ill uncured, the deed undone,  
The life one never lived, the answer one never knew  
Till the white shadow swayed the moon, stayed the expiring sun,

Until at his life's end, the shadow of the white face, the white dress

Became his inmost thought, his private wound, the word unspoken,

All that he cherished in failure, all that had failed his success;  
She became the crystal orb, half-seen, untouched, unbroken.

There on his death bed, kneeling at the bed's foot, he trembling  
saw,

The image of the Mother-Goddess, enormous, archaic, cruel,  
Overpowering the universe, creating her own inexorable law,  
Molded of stone, but her fire and ice flooded the room like a pool.

And she was the shadow in the white dress, no longer slight and  
flying,

But solid as death. Her cold, firm, downward look,  
Brought close to the dissolving mind the marvellous act of dying,  
And on her lap, the clasped, closed, iron book.

### *Lightning for Atmosphere*

THE warriors, tigers, flowers of Delacroix  
Painted upon the walls ablaze with light  
Pure light, cloud blanchéd, that unstained white,  
Queen of the colors, whom all other tints destroy,  
Color of the dwindling moon.

Or white lightning, seascapes of Chateaubriand  
Shores the dramatic ocean beats upon,  
Where the lone hero, gloomy on the wild strand  
Sees friends and lovers and companions gone,  
Hawk, gull, and heron flying.

White-capped mountains, peaks of dazzling snow  
Cloud-pointed Alps, sharp unclimbable heights  
Burning effulgence of the northern lights  
Toward whose clear radiance, our desire grows,  
White heat of the infinite.

The intense young lady seen in a dream long gone  
Ringleted, lonely in her villa by the sea  
Peers through a misted window, sees the floating swan,  
Wild geese whiten the sky, lighten the fir tree  
Shrill, sound-shattering solitude.

White-gowned in the thin, nocturnal air  
She throws her book aside and her fine ear  
Hears flying catches of joy, the ecstatic fear,  
Whiteness of the abyss; through her soul's precipice  
Dark flows the midnight of her hanging hair.

She through a deep hallucination seeing  
Strong waves from sheer, salt oceans, drowned lovers  
Pallid and proud. The white blank mind discovers  
Figures rising from waterfalls, appearing, fleeing  
Into damp creeks, into the steep ravines.

All hearts have their precipices, Alps, white peaks  
Moments when the white bird with the deep wound must come  
To sing and swoon upon enchanted willows,  
The heart disguises its symbols, peers through the hid ravines  
Steep-gaping between wars.

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HOWARD BAKER

---

*A Letter from the Country*

*To a Young Editor*

IF you are bound to till a soil where farms  
Long sown to whirlwinds lavishly crop storms,  
Then I suggest your program be  
One of informed tenacity.

You'll find the manners of our rural folk  
Too mild, where smoking tractors stain the oak,  
Where lakebeds heave up to the sun  
And deserts with deep rivers run:

A fetid land, for there plain fruits are spurned,  
Raised to be gazed at, fingered, and be burned;  
Years pass, where almanacs are mad,  
Harvestless save to reap a fad.

These things, I mean, are merely outward signs.  
For there are inward wolves who trace our vines  
And mark, in name of sensuous truth,  
Each grape with orgiastic tooth:

Magicians of the senses, necromancers,  
And arty exhibitionistic dancers—  
These you must steadily defy  
Lest they give you their evil eye.

Defiance, bent like a familiar cloak;  
Hate, choicest heirloom from your buried folk;  
And frugal narrow-mindedness—  
Cut from these cloths your usual dress.

Be much hedged in. Rehearse the ancient ways  
Till to your strong windbreak on wholesome days,  
Timid, to fright still uninured,  
Comes Amaryllis, reassured;

Comes softly, briar-scratched, with tangled hair,  
Leading those others who wait and shyly stare—  
Masters who fled the savage wave,  
Returned unkempt from their high cave.

Then lean your head to their slow syllables:  
Whispering deep seas beneath the fleeting gulls:  
The torch of Hecuba, the birth,  
Ruined Ilium fading into earth:

Of sin, and change, which never changes sin,  
Speak these, the seashells; their voice is the thin  
Threaded impalpable high cry,  
The constant in humanity.

Pity alone one who in learned tone  
Drops wistful notes on youths and seasons flown;  
The rest, come back from Death's black lands,  
Once held Death off with naked hands.

Visitors from impending quiet, they!  
They patiently await a better day.  
Meanwhile a tale, though poor of laurel,  
Is worth retelling for its moral.

Hold to your cottage, yet be swift to sting  
The pedlar who displays a ciphered ring  
And nostrums made of standard parts,  
Who lisps of shortcuts to the arts;

Lest unobserved he spell his runic schemes,  
Rest in a bed of cold ill-natured dreams;  
Leave with your napkin your cheer at table.  
That is the lesson; this the fable:

A bee who made a pasture her domain  
Taught cows that it was healthful to abstain  
Till she herself was through with clover;  
And many picnics chased to cover.

She reigned a vixen till one day, too kind,  
She let a cow, low bowing, come behind,  
Catch up and wrap her in its tongue.  
Mussed and enraged, she would have stung,

Except that vengeance seemed a richer feast  
If taken in the inwards of the beast.  
So down a warm canal she moved—  
Lethe for her, it almost proved.

She slept; dreamt regal dreams of one cow's fate;  
Awoke with verdict sealed, but rather late;  
With stinger poised, the sheath withdrawn,  
She noticed that the cow was gone.

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ROBERT PENN WARREN

---

*End of Season*

LEAVE now the beach, and even that perfect friendship  
—Hair frosting, careful teeth—that came, oh! late,  
*Late, late, almost too late:* that thought like a landslip;  
Or only the swimmer's shape for which you would wait,  
Bemused and pure among the bright umbrellas, while  
Blue mountains breathed and the dark boys cried their bird-  
throated syllable.

Leave beach, *spiagga, playa, plage, or spa,*  
Where beginnings are always easy; or leave, even,  
The Springs where your grandpa went in Arkansas  
To purge the rheumatic guilt of beef and bourbon,  
And slept like a child, nor called out with the accustomed night-  
mare,  
But lolled his old hams, stained hands, in that Lethe, as others,  
others, before.

For waters wash our guilt and dance in the sun:  
And the prophet, hairy and grim in the leonine landscape,  
Came down to Jordan; toward moon-set de Leon  
Woke, while squat Time clucked like the darkling ape;  
And Dante's *duca*, smiling in the blessed clime,  
With rushes, sea-wet, wiped from that sad brow the infernal  
grime.

*You'll come, you'll come!* and with the tongue gone wintry  
You'll greet in town the essential face, which now wears  
The mask of travel, smudge of history;  
And wordless, each one clasps, and stammering, stares:  
You will have to learn a new language to say what is to say,  
But it will never be useful in schoolroom, customs, or café.

For purity was wordless, and perfection  
But the bridegroom's sleep or the athlete's marble dream,  
And the annual sacrament of sea and sun,  
Which browns the face and heals the heart, will seem  
Silence, expectant to the answer, which is Time:  
For all our conversation is index to our common crime.

On the last day swim far out, should the doctor permit  
—Crawl, trudgeon, breast—or deep and wide-eyed, dive  
Down the glaucous glimmer where no voice can visit;  
But the mail lurks in the box at the house where you live:  
Summer's wishes, winter's wisdom—you must think  
On the true nature of Hope, whose eye is round and does not  
wink.

### *Revelation*

BECAUSE he had spoken harshly to his mother,  
The day became astonishingly bright,  
The enormity of distance crept to him like a dog now,  
And earth's own luminescence seemed to repel the night.

Roof was rent like the loud paper tearing to admit  
Sun-sulphurous splendor where had been before  
But the submarine glimmer by kindly countenances lit,  
As slow, phosphorescent dignities light the ocean floor.

By walls, by walks, chrysanthemum and aster,  
All hairy, fat-petalled species, lean, confer,  
And his ears, and heart, should burn at that insidious whisper  
Which concerns him so, he knows; but he cannot make out the  
words.

The peacock screamed, and his feathered fury made  
Legend shake, all day, while the sky ran pale as milk;  
That night, all night, the buck rabbit stamped in the moonlit  
glade,



And the owl's brain glowed like a coal in the grove's combustible dark.

When Sulla smote and Rome was rent, Augustine  
Recalled how Nature, shuddering, tore her gown,  
And kind changed kind, and the blunt herbivorous tooth dripped  
blood;  
At Duncan's death, at Dunsinane, chimneys blew down.

But, oh! his mother was kinder than ever Rome,  
Dearer than Duncan—no wonder, then, Nature's frame  
Thrilled in voluptuous hemispheres far off from his home;  
But not in terror: only as the bride, as the bride.

In separateness only does love learn definition,  
Though Brahma smiles beneath the dappled shade,  
Though tears, that night, wet the pillow where the boy's head  
was laid  
Dreamless of splendid antipodal agitation;

And though across what tide and tooth Time is,  
He was to lean back toward that recalcitrant face,  
He would think, than Sulla more fortunate, how once he had  
learned  
Something important about love, and about love's grace.

### *Pursuit*

THE hunchback on the corner, with gum and shoelaces,  
Has his own wisdom and pleasures, and may not be lured  
To divulge them to you, for he has merely endured  
Your appeal for his sympathy and your kind purchases;  
And wears infirmity but as the general who turns  
Apart, in his famous old greatcoat there on the hill  
At dusk when the rapture and cannonade are still,  
To muse withdrawn from the dead, from his gorgeous sub  
alterns;

Or stares from the thicket of his familiar pain, like a fawn  
That meets you a moment, wheels, in imperious innocence is  
gone.

Go to the clinic. Wait in the outer room,  
Where like an old possum the snag-nailed hand will hump  
On its knee in murderous patience, and the pomp  
Of pain swells like the Indies, or a plum.  
And there you will stand, as on the Roman hill,  
Stunned by each withdrawn gaze and severe shape,  
The first barbarian victor stood to gape  
At the sacrificial fathers, white-robed, still;  
And even the feverish old Jew regards you with authority  
Till you feel like one who has come too late, or improperly  
clothed, to a party.

The doctor will take you now. He is burly and clean;  
Listening, like lover or worshiper, bends at your heart;  
But cannot make out just what it tries to impart;  
So smiles; says you simply need a change of scene.  
Of scene, of solace: therefore Florida,  
Where Ponce de Leon clanked among the lilies,  
Where white sails skit on blue and cavort like fillies,  
And the shoulder gleams in the moonlit corridor.  
A change of love: if love is a groping Godward, though blind,  
No matter what crevice, cranny, chink, bright in dark, the pale  
tentacle find.

In Florida consider the flamingo,  
Its color passion but its neck a question;  
Consider even that girl the other guests shun  
On beach, at bar, in bed, for she may know  
The secret you are seeking, after all;  
Or the child you humbly sit by, excited and curly,  
That screams on the shore at the sea's sunlit hurlyburly,  
Till the mother calls its name, toward nightfall.  
Till you sit alone: in the dire meridians, off Ireland, in fury  
Of spume-tooth and dawnless sea-heave, salt rimes the lookout's  
devout eye.

Till you sit alone—which is the beginning of error—  
Behind you the music and lights of the great hotel:  
Solution, perhaps, is public, despair personal,  
But history held to your breath clouds like a mirror.  
There are many states, and towns in them, and faces,  
But meanwhile, the little old lady in black, by the wall,  
Who admires all the dancers, and tells you how just last fall  
Her husband died in Ohio, and damp mists her glasses;  
She blinks and croaks, like a toad or a Norn, in the horrible  
light,  
And rattles her crutch, which may put forth a small bloom, per-  
haps white.

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KENNETH PATCHEN

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*The Character of Love Seen as a Search  
for the Lost*

YOU, the woman; I, the man; this, the world:  
And each is the work of all.

There is the muffled step in the snow; the stranger;  
The crippled wren; the nun; the dancer; the Jesus-wing  
Over the walkers in the village; and there are  
Many beautiful arms about us and the things we know.

See how those stars tramp over heaven on their sticks  
Of ancient light: with what simplicity that blue  
Takes eternity into the quiet cave of God, where Caesar  
And Socrates, like primitive paintings on a wall,  
Look, with idiot eyes, on the world where we two are.

You, the sought for; I, the seeker; this, the search:  
And each is the mission of all.

For greatness is only the drayhorse that coaxes  
The built cart out; and where we go is reason.  
But genius is an enormous littleness, a trickling  
Of heart that covers alike the hare and the hunter.

How smoothly, like the sleep of a flower, love,  
The grassy wind moves over night's tense meadow:  
See how the great wooden eyes of the forest  
Stare upon the architecture of our innocence.

You, the village; I, the stranger; this, the road:  
And each is the work of all.

Then, not that man do more, or stop pity; but that he be  
Wider in living; that all his cities fly a clean flag . . .  
We have been alone too long, love; it is terribly late  
For the pierced feet on the water and we must not die now.

Have you wondered why all the windows in heaven were broken?  
Have you seen the homeless in the open grave of God's hand?  
Do you want to acquaint the larks with the fatuous music of war?

There is the muffled step in the snow; the stranger;  
The crippled wren; the nun; the dancer; the Jesus-wing  
Over the walkers in the village; and there are  
Many desperate arms about us and the things we know.

### *Fog*

RAIN'S lovely gray daughter has lost her tall lover.  
He whose mouth she knew; who was good to her.

I've heard her talk of him when the river lights  
Scream 'Christ! it's lonely; Christ! it's cold.'

Heard the slug cry of her loneliness calling him  
When the ship's mast points to no star in the North.

Many men have thought they were he;  
Feeling her cold arms as they held death in theirs—

The woman-face in the frame of nothingness;  
As the machinery of sleep turned its first wheel;

And they slept, while angels fell in colored sound  
Upon the closing waters. Child and singing cradle one.

O sorrowful lady whose lover is that harbor  
In a heaven where all we of longing lie, clinging together as it  
gets dark.

### *At the New Year*

IN the shape of this night, in the still fall of snow, Father  
In all that is cold and tiny, these little birds and children  
In everything that moves tonight, the trolleys and the lovers,  
Father  
In the great hush of country, in the ugly noise of our cities  
In this deep throw of stars, in those trenches where the dead are,  
Father  
In all the wide land waiting, and in the liners out on the black  
water  
In all that has been said bravely, in all that is mean anywhere in  
the world, Father  
In all that is good and lovely, in every house where sham and  
hatred are  
In the name of those who wait, in the sound of angry voices,  
Father  
Before the bells ring, before this little point in time has rushed  
us on  
Before this clean moment has gone, before this night turns to  
face tomorrow, Father  
There is this high singing in the air  
Forever this sorrowful human face in eternity's window  
And there are other bells that we would ring, Father  
Other bells that we would ring.

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DELMORE SCHWARTZ

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*In the Naked Bed, in Plato's Cave*

IN the naked bed, in Plato's cave,  
Reflected headlights slowly slid the wall,  
Carpenters hammered under the shaded window,  
Wind troubled the window curtains all night long,  
A fleet of trucks strained uphill, grinding,  
Their freights covered, as usual.  
The ceiling lightened again, the slanting diagram  
Slid slowly forth.

Hearing the milkman's chop,  
His striving up the stair, the bottle's chink,  
I rose from bed, lit a cigarette,  
And walked to the window. The stony street  
Displayed the stillness in which buildings stand,  
The street-lamp's vigil and the horse's patience.  
The winter sky's pure capital  
Turned me back to bed with exhausted eyes.

Strangeness grew in the motionless air. The loose  
Film grayed. Shaking wagons, hooves' waterfalls,  
Sounded far off, increasing, louder and nearer.  
A car coughed, starting. Morning, softly  
Melting the air, lifted the half-covered chair  
From underseas, kindled the looking-glass,  
Distinguished the dresser and the white wall.  
The bird called tentatively, whistled, called,  
Bubbled and whistled, so! Perplexed, still wet  
With sleep, affectionate, hungry and cold. So, so,  
O son of man, the ignorant night, the travail  
Of early morning, the mystery of beginning  
Again and again,

while History is unforgiven.

*At This Moment of Time*

SOME who are uncertain compel me. They fear  
The Ace of Spades. They fear  
Love offered suddenly, turning from the mantelpiece,  
Sweet with decision. And they distrust  
The fireworks by the lakeside, first the puffs,  
Then the colored lights, rising.  
Tentative, hesitant, doubtful, they consume  
Greedy Caesar at the prow returning,  
Locked in the stone of his act and office.  
While the brass band brightly bursts over the water  
They stand in the crowd lining the shore  
Aware of the water beneath Him. They know it. Their eyes  
Are haunted by water.

Disturb me, compel me. It is not true  
That "no man is happy," but that is not  
The sense which guides you. If we are  
Unfinished (we are, unless hope is a bad dream),  
You are exact. You tug my sleeve  
Before I speak, with a shadow's friendship,  
And I remember that we who move  
Are moved by clouds that darken midnight.

*Socrates' Ghost Must Haunt Me Now*

SOCRATES' ghost must haunt me now,  
Notorious death has let him go,  
He comes to me with a clumsy bow,  
Saying in his disused voice,  
That I do not know I do not know,  
The mechanical whims of appetite  
Are all that I have of conscious choice,  
The butterfly caged in electric light  
Is my only day in the world's great night,

Love is not love, it is a child  
 Sucking his thumb and biting his lip,  
 But grasp it all, there may be more!  
 From the topless sky to the bottomless floor  
 With the heavy head and the finger tip:  
 All is not blind, obscene, and poor.  
 Socrates stands by me stockstill,  
 Teaching hope to my flickering will,  
 Pointing to the sky's inexorable blue  
 —Old Noumenon, come true, come true!

*"Mentrechè il Vento, Come Fa, Si Tace"*

WILL you perhaps consent to be  
 Now that a little while is still  
 (Ruth of sweet wind) now that a little while  
 My mind's continuing and unreleasing wind  
 Touches this single of your flowers, this one only,  
 Will you perhaps consent to be  
 My many-branchéd, small and dearest tree?

My mind's continuing and unreleasing wind  
 —The wind which is wild and restless, tired and asleep,  
 The wind which is tired, wild and still continuing,  
 The wind which is chill, and warm, wet, soft, in every influence,  
 Lusts for Paris, Crete and Pergamus,  
 Is suddenly off for Paris and Chicago,  
 Judaea, San Francisco, the Midi,  
 —May I perhaps return to you  
 Wet with an Attic dust and chill from Norway  
 My dear, so-many-branchéd smallest tree?

Would you perhaps consent to be  
 The very rack and crucifix of winter, winter's wild  
 Knife-edged, continuing and unreleasing,  
 Intent and stripping, ice-caressing wind?  
 My dear, most dear, so-many-branchéd smallest tree  
 My mind's continuing and unreleasing wind



Touches this single of your flowers, faith in me,  
Wide as the—sky!—accepting as the (air)!  
—Consent, consent, consent to be  
My many-branched, small and dearest tree.

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RICHARD EBERHART

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*The Largest*

WITH Cicada's nymphal skin  
So have I meetings made,  
Let down my eyes to him,  
With fear upon that thin shade.

Lest the look I gave  
Was death's loving me,  
To every memory have,  
That himself he see.

Yet O marvellous crispness,  
Dun, but perfect structure,  
Thin as matter is,  
It has its wondrous lure.

And took it in my grassy feel,  
That cold, that final form,  
If still it be the same;  
Alert to a hoped harm.

Where have you gone, slight being  
Whose brown monument  
Mirror makes of wings  
Yet in a damp tenement.

Can I among winds lose you  
When vibrant is all air?  
Must I not use you  
Then in every desire?

Do treble drums a changing  
Ecstasy keep fresh;  
Insistent, sing to me,  
Over fields of August.

It has not denied my mind,  
But no sign has made,  
Bleak, delicate, defined  
And crinkled husk once life had.

My eyes soothe over him,  
My hand trembles with force.  
What eternal hovers in  
Him: speak, are you corpse?

### *Experience Evoked*

NOW come to me all men  
With savagery and innocence,  
With axe to chop the fir tree,  
Or seed, small, for the immense  
Sewing of earth with old Rose.  
Now come all men, arrayed  
With the colours of the garden  
Around them where they stayed  
Till bone began to harden  
Under the thinning of the nose.  
Come all men, unto whom  
Wind was a snarling wire whip  
In the contusions of a doom  
And with red flecks on their lip  
They leaped up, danced, grew tall.  
Come all, the babe bound

In terror and panic cry;  
Or an old man found  
With a skylark in his eye.  
Come, harsh shroud over all.

### *The Groundhog*

IN June, amid the golden fields,  
I saw a groundhog lying dead.  
Dead lay he; my senses shook,  
And mind outshot our naked frailty.  
There lowly in the vigorous summer  
His form began its senseless change,  
And made my senses waver dim  
Seeing nature ferocious in him.  
Inspecting close his maggots' might  
And seething cauldron of his being,  
Half with loathing, half with a strange love,  
I poked him with an angry stick.  
The fever arose, became a flame  
And Vigour circumscribed the skies,  
Immense energy in the sun,  
And through my frame a sunless trembling.  
My stick had done nor good nor harm.  
Then stood I silent in the day  
Watching the object, as before;  
And kept my reverence for knowledge  
Trying for control, to be still,  
To quell the passion of the blood;  
Until I had bent down on my knees  
Praying for joy in the sight of decay.  
And so I left; and I returned  
In Autumn strict of eye, to see  
The sap gone out of the groundhog,  
But the bony sodden hulk remained.  
But the year had lost its meaning,

And in intellectual chains  
I lost both love and loathing,  
Mured up in the wall of wisdom.  
Another summer took the fields again  
Massive and burning, full of life,  
But when I chanced upon the spot  
There was only a little hair left,  
And bones bleaching in the sunlight  
Beautiful as architecture;  
I watched them like a geometer,  
And cut a walking stick from a birch.  
It has been three years, now.  
There is no sign of the groundhog.  
I stood there in the whirling summer,  
My hand capped a withered heart,  
And thought of China and of Greece,  
Of Alexander in his tent;  
Of Montaigne in his tower,  
Of Saint Theresa in her wild lament.

## 1934

CAUGHT upon a thousand thorns, I sing,  
Like a rag in the wind,  
Caught in the blares of the automobile horns  
And on the falling airplane's wing.  
Caught napping in my study  
Among a thousand books of poetry.

Doing the same thing over and over again  
Brings about an obliteration of pain.  
Each day dies in a paper litter  
As the heart becomes less like a rapier.  
In complexity, feeling myself absurd  
Dictating an arbitrary word,

My self my own worst enemy,  
Hunting the past through all its fears,

That on the brain that glory burst  
Bombing a ragged future's story,  
Caught in iron individuality  
As in the backwash of a sea

Knowing not whether to fight out,  
Or keep silent; to talk about the weather,  
Or rage again through wrong and right,  
Knowing knowledge is a norm of nothing,  
And I have been to the Eastern seas  
And walked on all the Hebrides.

Ashamed of loving a long-practised selfhood,  
Lost in a luxury of speculation,  
At the straight grain of a pipe I stare  
And spit upon all worlds of Spain;  
Time like a certain sedative  
Quelling the growth of the purpose tree.

Aware of the futility of action,  
Of the futility of prayer aware,  
Trying to pry from the vest of poetry  
The golden heart of mankind's deep despair,  
Unworthy of a simple love  
In august, elected worlds to move

Stern, pliant in the modern world, I sing,  
Afraid of nothing and afraid of everything,  
Curtailing joy, withholding irony,  
Pleased to condemn contemporaneity  
Seeking the reality, skirting  
The dangerous absolutes of fear and hope,

And I have eased reality and fiction  
Into a kind of intellectual fruition  
Strength in solitude, life in death,  
Compassion by suffering, love in strife,  
And ever and still the weight of mystery  
Arrows a way between my words and me.

## MURIEL RUKEYSER

*Ajanta*

NOTE: In India, between the second century B.C. and the sixth century A.D., a school of Buddhist painter-monks worked on the walls of the Ajanta caves, keeping a tradition in painting that was lost in the East after them and never known in the West. Based on the religious analogy between the space of the body and the space of the universe, the treatment of bodies in these scenes of the life of the gods is such that the deepest background is the wall on which the paintings are done—the figures in the round but shadowless, start forward, seeming to fill the cave. Reality is fully accepted, then, the function of such an art is to fill with creation an accepted real world.

CAME in my full youth to the midnight cave  
nerves ringing; and this thing I did alone.  
Wanting my fulness and not a field of war,  
for the world considered annihilation, a star  
called Wormwood rose and flickered, shattering  
bent light over the dead boiling up in the ground,  
the biting yellow of their corrupted lives  
streaming to war, denying all our words.  
Nothing was left among the tainted weather  
but world-walking and the shadowless Ajanta.  
Hallucination and the metal laugh  
in clouds, and the mountain-spectre riding storm.  
Nothing was certain but a moment of peace,  
a hollow behind the unbreakable waterfall.  
All the way to the cave, the teeming forms of death,  
and death, the price of the body, cheap as air.  
I blessed my heart on the expiation journey  
for it had never been unable to suffer:  
when I met the man whose face looked like the future,  
when I met the whore with the dying red hair,  
the child myself who is my murderer.  
So came I between heaven and my grave

past the serene smile of the *voyeur*, to  
this cave where the myth enters the heart again.

## II. THE CAVE

Space to the mind, the painted cave of dream.  
This is not a womb, nothing but good emerges:  
this is a stage, neither unreal nor real  
where the walls are the world, the rocks and palaces  
stand on a borderland of blossoming ground.  
If you stretch your hand, you touch the slope of the world  
reaching in interlaced gods, animals, and men.  
There is no background. The figures hold their peace  
in a web of movement. There is no frustration,  
every gesture is taken, everything yields connections.  
The heavy sensual shoulders, the thighs, the blood-born flesh  
and earth turning into color, rocks into their crystals,  
water to sound, fire to form; life flickers  
uncounted into the supple arms of love.  
The space of these walls is the body's living space;  
tear open your ribs and breathe the color of time  
where nothing leads away, the world comes forward  
in flaming sequences. Pillars and prisms. Riders  
and horses and the figures of consciousness,  
red cow grows long, goes running through the world.  
Flung into movement in carnal purity,  
these bodies are sealed—warm lip and crystal hand  
in a jungle of light. Color-sheeted, seductive  
foreboding eyelid lowered on the long eye,  
fluid and vulnerable. The spaces of the body  
are suddenly limitless, and riding flesh  
shapes constellations over the golden breast,  
confusion of scents and illuminated touch—  
monster touch, the throat printed with brightness,  
wide outlined gesture where the bodies ride.  
Bells, and the spirit flashing. The religious bells,  
bronze under the sunlight like breasts ringing,  
bronze in the closed air, the memory of walls,  
great sensual shoulders in the web of time.

## III. LES TENDRESSES BESTIALES

A procession of caresses alters the ancient sky  
until new constellations are the body shining:  
There's the Hand to steer by, there the horizon Breast,  
and the Great Stars kindling the fluid hill.  
All the rooms open into magical boxes,  
nothing is tilted, everything flickers  
sexual and exquisite.  
The panther with its throat along my arm  
turns black and flows away.  
Deep in all streets passes a faceless whore  
and the checkered men are whispering one word.  
The face I know becomes the night-black rose.  
The sharp face is now an electric fan  
and says one word to me.  
The dice and the alcohol and the destruction  
have drunk themselves and cast.  
Broken bottle of loss, and the glass  
turned bloody into the face.  
Now the scene comes forward, very clear.  
Dream-singing, airborne, surrenders the recalled,  
the gesture arrives riding over the breast,  
singing, singing, tender atrocity,  
the silver derelict wearing fur and claws.  
Oh love, I stood under the apple branch,  
I saw the whipped bay and the small dark islands,  
and night sailing the river and the foghorn's word.  
My life said to you: I want to love you well.  
The wheel goes back and I shall live again,  
but the wave turns, my birth arrives and spills  
over my breast the world bearing my grave,  
and your eyes open in earth. You touched my life.  
My life reaches the skin, moves under your smile,  
and your shoulders and your throat and your face and your  
thighs  
flash.

I am haunted by interrupted acts,



introspective as a leper, enchanted  
by a repulsive clew,  
a gross and fugitive movement of the limbs.  
Is this the love that shook the lights to flame?  
Sheeted avenues thrash in the wind,  
torn streets, the savage parks.  
I am plunged deep. Must find the midnight cave.

#### IV. BLACK BLOOD

A habit leading to murder, smoky laughter  
hated at first, but necessary later.  
Alteration of motives. To stamp in terror  
around the deserted harbor, down the hill  
until the woman laced into a harp  
screams and screams and the great clock strikes,  
swinging its giant figures past the face.  
The Floating Man rides on the ragged sunset  
asking and asking. Do not say, Which loved?  
Which was beloved? Only, Who most enjoyed?  
Armored ghost of rage, screaming and powerless.  
Only find me and touch my blood again.  
Find me. A girl runs down the street  
singing Take me, yelling Take me Take  
Hang me from the clapper of a bell  
and you as hangman ring it sweet tonight,  
for nothing clean in me is more than cloud  
unless you call it.—As I ran I heard  
a black voice beating among all that blood:  
“Try to live as if there were a God.”

#### V. THE BROKEN WORLD

Came to Ajanta cave, the painted space of the breast,  
the real world where everything is complete,  
there are no shadows, the forms of incompleteness.  
The great cloak blows in the light, rider and horse arrive,  
the shoulders turn and every gift is made.

No shadows fall. There is no source of distortion.  
In our world, a tree casts the shadow of a woman,  
a man the shadow of a phallus, a hand raised  
the shadow of the whip.  
Here everything is itself,  
here all may stand  
on summer earth.

Brightness has overtaken every light,  
and every myth netted itself in flesh.

New origins, and peace given entire  
and the spirit alive.

In the shadowless cave  
the naked arm is raised.

Animals arrive,  
interlaced, and gods  
interlaced, and men  
flame-woven.

I stand and am complete.

Crawls from the door,  
black at my two feet  
the shadow of the world.

World, not yet one,  
enters the heart again.

The naked world, and the old noise of tears,  
the fear, the expiation and the love,  
a world of the shadowed and alone.

The journey, and the struggles of the moon.

### *Boy with His Hair Cut Short*

SUNDAY shuts down on this twentieth-century evening.  
The L passes. Twilight and bulb define  
the brown room, the overstuffed plum sofa,  
the boy, and the girl's thin hands above his head.  
A neighbor radio sings stocks, news, serenade.

He sits at the table, head down, the young clear neck exposed,  
watching the drugstore sign from the tail of his eye;  
tattoo, neon, until the eye blears, while his  
solicitous tall sister, simple in blue, bending  
behind him, cuts his hair with her cheap shears.

The arrow's electric red always reaches its mark,  
successful neon! He coughs, impressed by that precision.  
His child's forehead, forever protected by his cap,  
is bleached against the lamplight as he turns head  
and steadies to let the snippets drop.

Erasing the failure of weeks with level fingers,  
she sleeks the fine hair, combing: "You'll look fine tomorrow!  
You'll surely find something, they can't keep turning you down;  
the finest gentleman's not so trim as you!" Smiling, he raises  
the adolescent forehead wrinkling ironic now.

He sees his decent suit laid out, new-pressed,  
his carfare on the shelf. He lets his head fall, meeting  
her earnest hopeless look, seeing the sharp blades splitting,  
the darkened room, the impersonal sign, her motion,  
the blue vein, bright on her temple, pitifully beating.

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KARL JAY SHAPIRO

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*Nostalgia*

MY soul stands at the window of my room,  
And I ten thousand miles away;  
My days are filled with Ocean's sound of doom,  
Salt and cloud and the bitter spray.  
Let the wind blow, for many a man shall die.

My selfish youth, my books with gilded edge,  
Knowledge and all gaze down the street;  
The potted plants upon the window ledge  
Gaze down with selfish lives and sweet.  
Let the wind blow, for many a man shall die.

My night is now her day, my day her night,  
So I lie down, and so I rise;  
The sun burns close, the star is losing height,  
The clock is hunted down the skies.  
Let the wind blow, for many a man shall die.

Truly a pin can make the memory bleed,  
A world explode the inward mind  
And turn the skulls and flowers never freed  
Into the air, no longer blind.  
Let the wind blow, for many a man shall die.

Laughter and grief join hands. Always the heart  
Clumps in the breast with heavy stride;  
The face grows lined and wrinkled like a chart,  
The eyes bloodshot with tears and tide.  
Let the wind blow, for many a man shall die.

### *The Fly*

O HIDEOUS little bat, the size of snot,  
With polyhedral eye and shabby clothes,  
To populate the stinking cat you walk  
The promontory of the dead man's nose,  
Climb with the fine leg of a Duncan-Phyfe  
The smoking mountains of my food  
And in a comic mood  
In mid-air take to bed a wife.

Riding and riding with your filth of hair  
On gluey foot or wing, forever coy,

Hot from the compost and green sweet decay,  
Sounding your buzzer like an urchin toy—  
You dot all whiteness with diminutive stool,  
    In the tight belly of the dead  
        Burrow with hungry head  
And inlay maggots like a jewel.

At your approach the great horse stomps and paws  
Bringing the hurricane of his heavy tail;  
Shod in disease you dare to kiss my hand  
Which sweeps against you like an angry flail;  
Still you return, return, trusting your wing  
    To draw you from the hunter's reach  
        That learns to kill to teach  
Disorder to the tinier thing.

My peace is your disaster. For your death  
Children like spiders cup their pretty hands  
And wives resort to chemistry of war.  
In fens of sticky paper and quicksands  
You glue yourself to death. Where you are stuck  
    You struggle hideously and beg  
        You amputate your leg  
Imbedded in the amber muck.

But I, a man, must swat you with my hate,  
Slap you across the air and crush your flight,  
Must mangle with my shoe and smear your blood,  
Expose your little guts pasty and white,  
Knock your head sideways like a drunkard's hat,  
    Pin your wings under like a crow's,  
        Tear off your flimsy clothes  
And beat you as one beats a rat.

Then like Gargantua I stride among  
The corpses strewn like raisins in the dust,  
The broken bodies of the narrow dead  
That catch the throat with fingers of disgust.  
I sweep. One gyrates like a top and falls

And stunned, stone blind, and deaf  
 Buzzes its frightful F  
 And dies between three cannibals.

*Epitaph for John and Richard*

THERE goes the clock; there goes the sun;  
 Greenwich is right with Arlington;  
 The signal's minutes are signifying  
 That somebody old has finished dying,  
 That somebody young has just begun.

What do you think you earned today  
 Except the waste, except the pay,  
 Except the power to be spending?  
 And now your year is striking, ending,  
 What do you think you have put away?

Only a promise, only a life  
 Squandered in secret with a wife  
 In bedtime feigning and unfeigning;  
 The blood has long since ceased complaining;  
 The clock has satisfied the strife.

They will not cast your honored head  
 Or say from lecterns what you said,  
 But only keep you with them all  
 Committed in the City Hall;  
 Once born, once married, and once dead.

*Travelogue for Exiles*

LOOK and remember. Look upon this sky;  
 Look deep and deep into the sea-clean air,  
 The unconfined, the terminus of prayer.  
 Speak now and speak into the hallowed dome.

What do you hear? What does the sky reply?  
*The heavens are taken: this is not your home.*

Look and remember. Look upon this sea;  
Look down and down into the tireless tide.  
What of a life below, a life inside,  
A tomb, a cradle in the curly foam?  
The waves arise; sea-wind and sea agree  
*The waters are taken: this is not your home.*

Look and remember. Look upon this land,  
Far, far across the factories and the grass.  
Surely, there, surely, they will let you pass.  
Speak then and ask the forest and the loam.  
What do you hear? What does the land command?  
*The earth is taken: this is not your home.*

### *The Twins*

LIKENESS has made them animal and shy.  
See how they turn their full gaze left and right,  
Seeking the other, yet not moving close;  
Nothing in their relationship is gross,  
But soft, conspicuous, like giraffes. And why  
Do they not speak except by sudden sight?

Sisters kiss freely and unsubtle friends  
Wrestle like lovers; brothers loudly laugh:  
These in a dreamier bondage dare not touch.  
Each is the other's soul and hears too much  
The heartbeat of the other; each apprehends  
The sad duality and the imperfect half.

The one lay sick, the other wandered free,  
But like a child to a small plot confined  
Walked a short way and dumbly reappeared.  
Is it not all-in-all of what they feared,  
The single death, the obvious destiny  
That maims the miracle their will designed?

For they go emptily from face to face,  
 Keeping the instinctive partnership of birth  
 A ponderous marriage and a sacred name;  
 Theirs is the pride of shouldering each the same  
 The old indignity of Esau's race  
 And Dromio's denouement of tragic mirth.

### Poet

*Il arrive que l'esprit demande la poésie*

LEFT leg flung out, head cocked to the right,  
 Tweed coat or army uniform, with book,  
 Beautiful eyes, who is this walking down?  
 Who, glancing at the pane of glass looks sharp  
 And thinks it is not he—as when a poet  
 Comes swiftly on some half-forgotten poem  
 And loosely holds the page, steady of mind,  
     Thinking it is not his?

And when will *you* exist?—Oh, it is I,  
 Incredibly skinny, stooped, and neat as pie,  
 Ignorant as dirt, erotic as an ape,  
 Dreamy as puberty—with dirty hair!  
 Into the room like kangaroo he bounds,  
 Ears flopping like the most expensive hound's;  
 His chin received all questions as he bows  
     Mouthing a green bon-bon.

Has no more memory than rubber. Stands  
 Waist-deep in heavy mud of thought and broods  
 At his own wetness. When he would get out,  
 To his surprise he lifts in air a phrase  
 As whole and clean and silvery as a fish.  
 Which jumps and dangles on his damned hooked grin,  
 But like a name-card on a man's lapel  
     Calls him a conscious fool.



And childlike he remembers all his life  
And cannily constructs it, fact by fact,  
As boys paste postage stamps in careful books,  
Denoting pence and legends and profiles,  
Nothing more valuable.—And like a thief,  
His eyes glassed over and concealed with guilt,  
Fondles his secrets like a case of tools,  
And waits in empty doors.

By men despised for knowing what he is,  
And by himself. But he exists for women.  
As dolls to girls, as perfect wives to men,  
So he to women. And to himself a thing,  
All ages, epicene, without a trade.  
To girls and wives always alive and fated;  
To men and scholars always dead like Greek  
And always mistranslated.

Towards exile and towards shame he lures himself,  
Tongue winding on his arm, and thinks like Eve  
By biting apple will become most wise.  
Sentio ergo sum: he feels his way  
And words themselves stand up for him like Braille  
And punch and perforate his parchment ear.  
All language falls like Chinese on his soul,  
Image of song unsounded.

This is the coward's coward that in his dreams  
Sees shapes of pain grow tall. Awake at night  
He peers at sounds and stumbles at a breeze.  
And none holds life less dear. For as a youth  
Who by some accident observes his love  
Naked and in some natural ugly act,  
He turns with loathing and with flaming hands,  
Scared and betrayed by sight.

He is the business man, on beauty trades,  
Dealer in arts and thoughts who, like the Jew,

Shall rise from slums and hated dialects  
A tower of bitterness. Shall be always strange,  
Hunted and then sought after. Shall be sat  
Like an ambassador from another race  
At tables rich with music. He shall eat flowers,  
Chew honey and spit out gall. They shall all smile  
And love and pity him.

His death shall be by drowning. In that hour  
When the last bubble of pure heaven's air  
Hovers within his throat, safe on his bed,  
A small eternal figurehead in terror,  
He shall cry out and clutch his days of straw  
Before the blackest wave. Lastly, his tomb  
Shall list and founder in the troughs of grass.  
And none shall speak his name.

### *Waitress*

WHOEVER with the compasses of his eyes  
Is plotting the voyage of your steady shape  
As you come laden through the room and back  
And rounding your even bottom like a Cape  
Crooks his first finger, whistles through his lip  
Till you arrive, all motion, like a ship,

He is my friend—consider his dark pangs  
And love of Niger, naked indigence,  
Dance him the menu of a poem and squirm  
Deep in the juke-box jungle, green and dense.  
Surely he files his teeth, punctures his nose,  
Carves out the god and takes off all his clothes.

For once, the token on the table's edge  
Sufficing, proudly and with hair unpinned  
You mounted the blueplate, stretched out and grinned  
Like Christmas fish and turkey pink and skinned,

Eyes on the half-shell, loin with parsley stuck,  
Thigh bones and ribs and little toes to suck.

I speak to you, ports of the northern myth,  
This dame is carved and eaten. One by one  
God knows what hour, her different parts go home,  
Lastly her pants and day or night is done;  
But on the restaurant the sign of fear  
Reddens and blazes—"English spoken here."

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JOHN MALCOLM BRINNIN

---

*The Late Summer*

TO say, Change Cometh, set the old scene straight,  
Mark off long summer in a frame of kites,  
Pegging the four blue corners of the wind;  
So turns my purpose backward, chilled with leaves.

Like voyagers who, slow to lose the weave  
Of seas beneath them, waver on the shore,  
So am I beached upon this running strand  
While underwater all Manhattan tolls.

Now shall I range the sands hysterical,  
And speak with parables to the swift sun?  
My hands are curious, when driftwood comes,  
Testing a branch, or tracing lettering.

If, in the manner of the books, some sail  
Comes riding over all that scattered loss,  
May I rejoice for piracy and thieves,  
Beat on a drum, scrimmage for preference?

Go down, my summertime, with every kite  
That, like a roving anchor, drags my heart;  
Come, summer like a masterpiece, come sky,  
Demand to be remembered, framed and false.

### *A Letter*

A DAY was nothing until this; words went  
Like horns through traffic, like the instant birds;  
A day was dormant, yet-to-be-danced among  
The sudden neon furniture and books.

It was that intricate familiar thing  
When, coughing like the French ambassador,  
The postman said his phrase about the rain  
And went undeviating through the door.

O, if I wanted legacies, a poem,  
An invitation to the dance, or hoped  
For declarations of a stranger's love,  
My fingers burst like matches on your name.

If it is later now, if the rain has stopped,  
If no one dressed in seaweed lurches in  
Like some surprised Ophelia with green hands,  
I covet reason but for truth like this:

There is communication on the earth  
As quiet as the opening of a wing;  
There is a wine of choice, and we who drink  
Touch all our future to that emphasis.

### *The Marginal Dark*

RAIN, like a traveler, walks on the night.  
Skyscrapers make their cubist gestures where

The reach of man outruns his mortal height;  
The intermittent multitudes are here,  
Grouped by the rain in doorways, stopped in flight  
Between commercial houses and the night.

I go among them since I must; transformed  
Upon the sidewalks, I assume their eyes  
And go misshapen with them to their charmed  
Arenas, their contrived realities  
Of cinema and song; we leave unharmed  
Though death is neighbor with his face transformed.

Assembled underground, we wait for trains  
That move through darkness like the track of time;  
We, cripples, negatives of promise, lean  
Our crutch of bones upon a scribbled beam;  
While the loud year beats impartially, like rain  
On eloquent marble, we await our trains.

Night of this night, there is a prayer in me  
Who read my destination in their love.  
O may this cancer and this leprosy  
The sovereign brand of our conjunction prove.  
This is my world among the beasts who see;  
In them I endure the night, and they in me.

---

HARRY BROWN

---

### *The Drill*

II WATCH them on the drill field, the awkward and the  
grave,  
The slow to action and the easily incensed,  
The tall plowboys, the pale clerks, the fast men with a dollar,

The frightened adolescents, and those whose eyes explode  
Like bombs or, like exhausted coals, lie dead.

They wheel and turn. The eternal convolutions  
Of close-order drill—Right Flank or To the Rear—  
Hold them as though, somnambulists, they moved  
In the imposing caverns of some recurring dream  
Where the only escape is to awake. But the night is very long.

The feet march on through the heavy summer morning.  
The bodies are anonymous in their cotton khaki clothes,  
And the faces, too, are all of a piece. Concealed at last from life  
Are the weak chin, the nose too large, the forehead rutted and  
worn,  
And the eyes too small, and the lips too fleshy or thin.

For the moment the accounts are all settled, the goods have all  
been sold,  
The last delivery made, the last essay sent to the printer,  
The elevator gone on its last strict voyage, the truck turned the  
last corner,  
The last issue of bonds taken up, the last class attended,  
The last row planted, the last payment made on the house.

The platoon moves past me on the field of summer,  
The gray dust rising from the grassless ground,  
Each man with his rifle resting on his shoulder,  
Each man with his bayonet slapping his thigh, each man  
With his eyes fixed on the man ahead, the corporals counting  
cadence.

The platoon moves past me into the mists of summer  
And disappears into the darkness of our time,  
A body of men, none known, none recognized,  
Crossing my road for a little space. They go  
Into the sun and the summer and the waiting war.

Seen for an instant and gone. Yet I felt between us  
A bond not of country but of faith and love,

And I thought of an old phrase: "Whither thou goest,  
I will go." And it seemed that the summer morning  
Spoke out in a voice like song, that the air was full of singing.

And something said, "They come and they go away,  
The patient and the small. They go away into the sun,  
Their names are forgotten and their few works also,  
But when they go they take their weapons with them,  
And they leave behind them houses heavy with honor."

And I thought: *It is enough*. As I stood in a field  
In Virginia in deep summer, while all around me  
The trees dipped and the grass rustled, I heard the sound  
Of platoons of men marching toward the crouching future,  
And the voices of our approaching generations.

### *Parade*

IT was a valorous music poured upon us  
In that bright morning, and it was as though  
The whole dour earth were moved by those sweet sounds  
That played around our bodies and in motion  
Conceived in us a love, but not of loving.  
We might have been alone upon the sun.

We were then pierced by pride that was entrancing,  
And stood there, made of sweat and steel and polish,  
Each with his latest thought his last thought wounding,  
A being in a being. The white music  
Caught us in clouds of sound and swirled us skyward.  
We were aware of nothing but our fires.

Then suddenly I lived beyond my breathing,  
Dissolved the mists of music, saw beside me  
Myself in such a stance, in various guises,  
The eternal soldier; and the ground was stirring  
Beneath my feet, and cities falling down.  
And madmen played gold music in my ears.

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LLOYD FRANKENBERG

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*The Sea*

IN the midmost of ocean  
the water lifts its arms dreaming of spars;  
the world is very round, projects its roundness  
past all the poles, beyond the one horizon  
on that bald ocean overhead, the sky  
where swim the worlds like fish in soundless waters.

Imposing its single structure on the sky  
and drawing thence its variable mood  
of bright confusion, gloom and equable  
conformity, the ocean goes scotfree  
of other obligation but to pay  
the moon its due respects, discharged like spouse.

Left to its own enormous devices the sea  
in timeless reverie conceives of life,  
being itself the world in pantomime.

Predicting past and future in one long  
drawn breath it blends its tides with dawn,  
rolls in panoramic sleight-of-hand  
creation out of chaos endlessly;

all forms revealed in fluid architecture  
flowing like time as if time were turned back:  
undreamed-of wars all happening at once  
(what rage pent up in atoms: do the drops  
take toll of one another? no the sea  
had not dreamed this)



but like a savage plays  
archaic symmetries and simple shapes:  
builds promontories, houses lakes, holds out  
mirages of itself, erects straw cliffs  
hurdled with ease;

or lolling all its length  
coiled and Niled, in coat of mail tilts evil  
complete with scale and hiss, smitten to sculpture,  
to iron leaves, to flame, to birds flying  
in and out of fluted, spandveled, spired  
buildings out of all time swaying, crumpling  
in scaffoldings of spray.

And then the flowers  
all petal and no stem; then finned and ferned,  
the leaping swordfish an effrontery  
to all its backs, all life presumptuous

and those looking too long upon its wake  
who thought to make themselves immortal too,  
taking it at its word, instruct it now

(old moonface cratered and sunksocketed,  
seamywrinkled, picked and pocked with waves,  
the waves all faces lifted looking around,  
hair dripping across their foreheads or flung back  
for a last despairing gasp before they drown)

for now the last least vestige of the air  
that gave the ocean its free hand with space,  
gave fins wings roots and legs to walk the sky,  
withdraws and leaves it still.

Now on its sleeve  
it wears the heart that every shipwreck finds;  
lies flat, unworked by other element

and in this state of utter unbelief  
that keeps it what it is, like nothing else,

smoother than glass, stiller than the dead,  
its natural supine and spineless self  
that never will arise but from without  
(yet even now protests the least intrusion)

believing not that all its mimicry  
has ever come to pass, how perfectly  
mirrors God's face, the workings of his mind.

### *Young Love*

SHE it is where they lie down  
Staring long into his stare  
Tries with little eyelids there  
Whether eyes were blue or brown.

Laughs with teeth against his own  
Asking, Am I always fair?  
Will you always always care?  
Tracing sinew, tracing bone

Till she know him and can tell  
And can place her finger where  
Sound from breath and breath from air  
Came and went. And come to dwell

Closer with him day to day,  
Little dare by little dare  
Death has quite undone his hair,  
Quite has kissed his lips away.

*Hide in the Heart*

## I.

HERE is no shadow but cloudshadow and nightshadow  
Moving across and rolling away and leaving  
Only the purple avenues the ant  
Drags his weight across from here to there  
Between the leaning towers of his town.

Here are no voices but the gull's hard lot  
Easing his discontent with all the beach,  
Abusive tongues of terns, rheumatic crows'  
Dry commentaries concerning tomorrow's weather  
And pipers fleeing the sound of their own lament.

And the wind's singing is before all music  
Picking the strings of grass and thumping the roof  
And all the stops of the ocean to be pulled out  
When anger is the howling of the wind  
And all armies the marches of the sea.

And mornings bringing the white lies of peace,  
The rags of truce upon the sea and sky,  
Ambassadorial breeze from cloud to wave,  
All solved and settled under a smiling sun  
Blandly agreeing his hands to everything.

Until the fog with sidelong stratagem  
Confers in huddled whispers with the earth—  
And ships and birds are asking their way about  
Of the whistling buoy that keeps its courage up  
Through the long dark and vistas of the mist—

Then lifts again, its mission elsewhere  
And leaves us this again our isle of quiet:  
Surrounded with seas of grass and the glassy sea  
Here in the sweet unreasonable weather  
We think us safe, we think us housed in peace.

## II.

All day the storm stood off from about our door.  
The tongues of sand lay panting in the sun,  
We listening to the sounds of listless water  
With wisps of ragtime over the dunes from town  
And scraps of headline: BOMBING ALMERIA.

Who brought this newspaper in like contraband  
To poison the horizons of our minds?  
All day the sun was stored serenity  
Before the cloud fulfilled its promised rain.  
Now seeing the fire-edged cloud our thought is of war.

Our sea was water where we drowned our thoughts.  
We plunged and lay like time—not like this time.  
Our sea was not an endless belt of bullets  
Round after round transmitted to the breech  
To riddle time to tatters and red teeth.

Now more than ever we do not know how long  
This little space of peace will be our own.  
The nations run like nightmare toward the repeated  
Dream's end and beyond the end and beyond,  
Toward the waking up screaming and it's true! it's true!

## III.

Nations perpetuate the fatal motion  
Letting their anger go from them with no  
Power to retract, to make amends and an end.  
The people standing under the balconies  
Look up and become part of what they see.

The cannon standing at stiff-armed salute  
Discharge their duties in the innocent air.  
The bleak and bankrupt bones are all there is

To pay revenge its dividend and hate  
Its pebble dropped, its circle widening.

## IV.

There is no hiding in these island seas.  
The air is full of forebodings of disaster  
The gulls come up dead on the tide. It is one to them  
Whether the world hold fish. The sandfleas dance  
Burning alive on the phosphorescent beach.

The stars are a regiment of fixed bayonets;  
The steelgrey seas a rank upon rank of helmets.  
Clouds march and countermarch. Winds marshal them;  
Roll on their spokes guncarriages of thunder.  
The army of grass is led in all directions.

A large drop falls and that is all. The storm  
Wheels to the skyline; leaves a sunspace; waits.  
These little silly bombardments are but a device  
To larger ends; rally the peace-protectors  
About false standards, his eye upon another.

## V.

All day the storm stood off in a rift of cloud.  
We thought us safe, we thought us housed in peace,  
Ringed in by sun, chalked off by grass, passed by  
In a lull of the storm, in a quiet isle. Till night  
Darkened our door and the storm broke and the sea

Moving in fury upon the enduring beach  
We put our windows against the rain, we drew  
Bolts on the wind and shuttered out the storm.  
At night the four walls shook like a heart in the gale  
Shedding a light like blood on the troubled darkness.

Four walls in the wind are the wind's mouse and we  
The heart in the mouse. The lightning lifts a paw,  
Purrs in its throat and lets the paw fall slack.  
The tail of the wind stirs lazily, shakes the floor  
And we are alone with the taste of mouth on mouth.

## VI.

Hide in the heart. There is no help without.  
The strong winds ramp about the world tonight.  
The heart is wide enough to move about.  
The heart is tall. In a world too small for flight  
This is the only border out of doubt.

The light comes in as through the hand's devotion.  
The world is held in the hollow of this hand.  
Its own sea with its own moon-made motion  
Rolls upon the shores of its own land.  
Before all singing is the music of this ocean.

Find out this music pounding through the wrists.  
Stop out the sounds of the feet tramping the roof.  
Let the rain beat with all its mailed fists.  
The heart is the only timber to be proof  
Against all thunderclaps and lightningtwists.

Hide in this roof until the storm has been;  
Till fear leaves us under the eaves of the blood  
And one by one arising let them in  
Disarming at the door the roaring flood,  
The infantry of rain and the strong wind.

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JOSÉ GARCIA VILLA

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*There Came You Wishing Me*

THERE came you wishing me \* \* \*  
And so I said \* \* \*  
And then you turned your head  
With the greatest beauty

Smiting me mercilessly!  
And then you said \* \* \*  
So that my heart was made  
Into the strangest country . . .

\* \* \* you said, so beautifully,  
So that an angel came  
To hear that name,  
And we caught him tremulously!

*Be Beautiful, Noble, Like the Antique Ant*

BE beautiful, noble, like the antique ant,  
Who bore the storms as he bore the sun,  
Wearing neither gown nor helmet,  
Though he was archbishop and soldier:  
Wore only his own flesh.

Salute characters with gracious dignity:  
Though what these are is left to  
Your own terms. Exact: the universe is  
Not so small but these will be found  
Somewhere. Exact: they will be found.

Speak with great moderation: but think  
With great fierceness, burning passion:  
Though what the ant thought  
No annals reveal, nor his descendants  
Break the seal.

Trace the tracelessness of the ant,  
Every ant has reached this perfection.  
As he comes, so he goes,  
Flowing as water flows,  
Essential but secret like a rose.

*God Said, "I Made a Man"*

GOD said, "I made a man  
Out of clay—  
But so bright he, he spun  
Himself to brightest Day

Till he was all shining gold,  
And oh,  
He was lovely to behold!  
But in his hands held he a bow

*Aimed at me* who created  
Him. And I said,  
'Wouldst murder me  
Who am thy Fountainhead!'

Then spoke he the man of gold:  
'I will not  
Murder thee! I do but  
Measure thee. Hold

Thy peace! And this I did.  
But I was curious  
Of this so regal head.  
'Give thy name!'—'Sir! Genius'."



*Now, If You Will Look in My Brain*

NOW, if you will look in my brain  
You will see not Because  
But Cause—  
The strict Rose whose clean  
Light utters all my pain.  
Dwelleth there my God  
With a strict Rod  
And a most luminous mien.

And He whippeth! lo how  
He whippeth! O see  
The rod's velocity  
In utterest unmercy  
Carve, inflict upon this brow  
The majesty of its doomed Now.

*My Mouth Is Very Quiet*

MY mouth is very quiet  
Reverencing the luminance of my brain:  
If words must find an outlet  
They must work with jewelled pain.

They must cut a way immaculate  
To leave the brain incorrupt:  
They must repay their Debt  
Like archangels undropt.

The miracle of a word is to my mouth  
The miracle of God in my brain:  
Archangels holding to His North and South,  
His East and West by an inviolable chain.

An archangel upon my mouth  
May blow his silver trumpet:

But he holds to his North or South,  
Blows—and again is quiet.

*The Way My Ideas Think Me*

THE way my ideas think me  
Is the way I unthink God.  
As in the name of heaven I make hell  
That is the way the Lord says me.

And all is adventure and danger  
And I roll Him off cliffs and mountains  
But fast as I am to push Him off  
Fast am I to reach Him below.

And it may be then His turn to push me off,  
I wait breathless for that terrible second:  
And if He push me not, I turn around in anger:  
"O art thou the God I would have!"

Then He pushes me and I plunge down, down!  
And when He comes to help me up  
I put my arms around Him, saying, "Brother,  
Brother." . . . This is the way we are.

*Saw God Dead but Laughing*

SAW God dead but laughing.  
Uttered the laugh for Him.  
Heard my skull crack with doom  
Tragedian laughing!

Peered into the cracked skull—  
Saw the tragic monkhood  
In the shape of God's deathhead  
Laughter upon its mouth a jewel.

Jewel bright, O Jewel bright,  
Laughter of the Lord.  
Laughter with eternity immured  
O laugh bright, laugh bright.

Then did the Lord laugh louder  
I laughing for Him,  
I from the heart's honeycomb  
Feeding braver, braver,

Till all the universe was Laughter  
But the Laughter of the Lord  
O the Laughter of His Word  
That could laugh only—after His murder.

*Mostly Are We Mostless*

MOSTLY are we mostless  
And neverness is all we become.  
The tiger is tigerless  
The flame is flameless.

Dig up Time like a tiger  
Dig up the beautiful grave  
The grave is graveless  
And God is Godless.

I saw myself reflected  
In the great eye of the grave.  
I saw God helpless  
And headless there.

Until I put my head on Him.  
Then he uprose superb.  
He took the body of me  
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